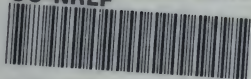


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# ETHICS

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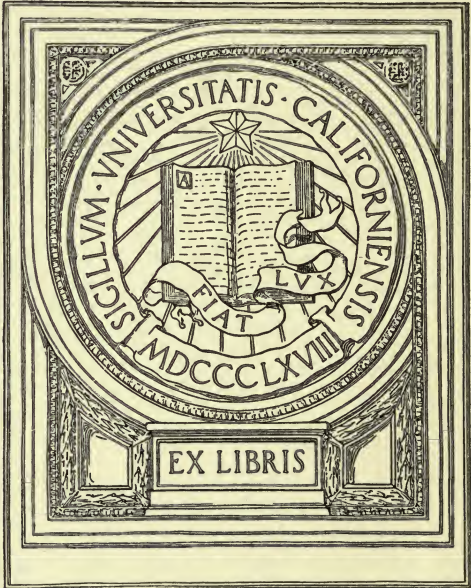
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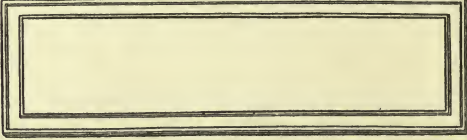
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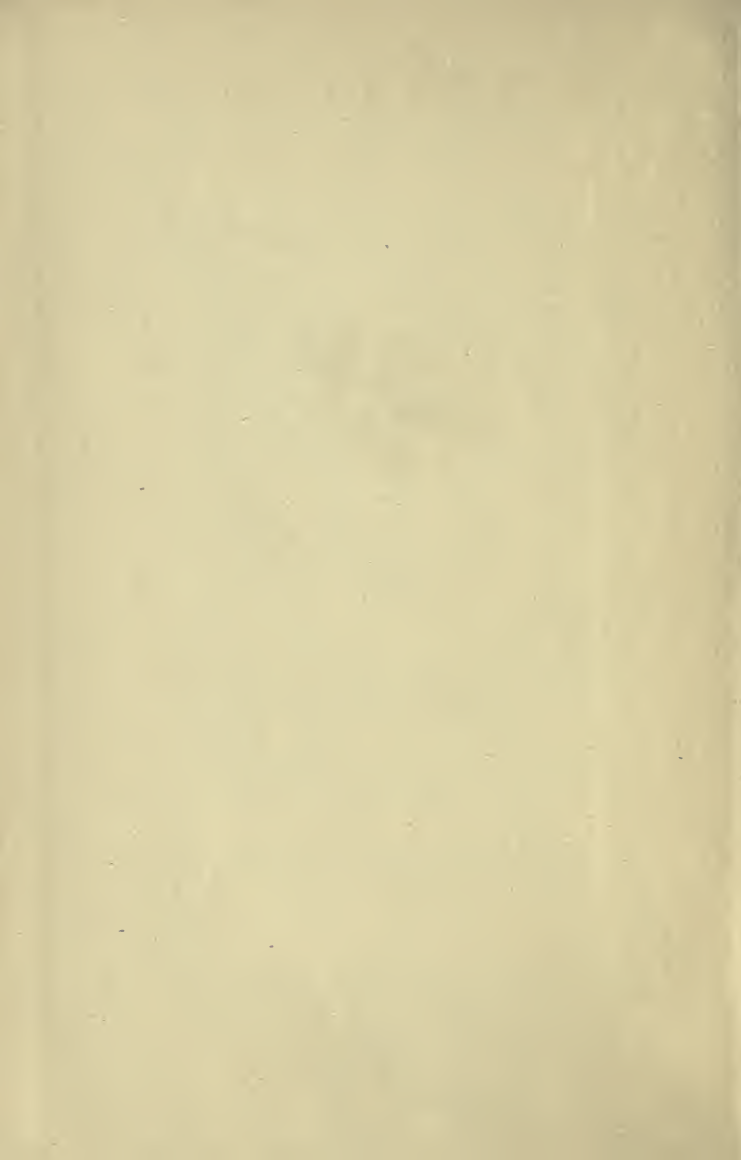
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## PREFACE

IT is scarcely possible for anyone who has written a large book on a subject to write a smaller one a few years later without, to a considerable extent, repeating himself. This little book is necessarily little more than a condensation of my *Theory of Good and Evil*. I have never written with that work before me, but I have not taken any particular pains to avoid repeating expressions or illustrations which occur in the larger book. There are, however, some criticisms upon a recent phase of Emotional Ethics which have not appeared before. This explanation seems desirable to prevent anyone who has already read the *Theory of Good and Evil* expecting to find much that is new, while it gives me the opportunity of referring to that work any reader who wants further explanation of the positions here taken up or answers to objections which will naturally present themselves. While I have tried in this volume not to conceal difficulties or to save the student from the labour of thought, I have endeavoured to make it a really elementary introduction to the subject.

H. R.

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# ETHICS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

AN exact definition of the scope or subject-matter of a Science is generally reached only at a late stage of its development, and the individual student will likewise get a clearer conception of what the Science is when he knows something of its subject-matter than he can possibly obtain from any formal definition with which he may be presented at the outset of his studies. I shall not therefore attempt at the present moment any very elaborate account of the scope or aim of Ethics, but will content myself with saying that it deals with the nature of Morality. We all use the terms good and evil, right and wrong. The question is what we mean or ought to mean by these terms—what is the real meaning and nature of “good” or “right”? Ethics or (to use the older term) Moral Philosophy is a Science which deals with all the questions which can possibly be raised about the good and the right. In particular it will be found that the general question breaks itself up into three main enquiries :

(1) What is the general nature of good or evil, right and wrong—what at bottom do we mean when we pronounce such and such a thing to be good, such and such an act to be right ?

(2) Assuming that there is some real meaning in the terms, that they do correspond to some real distinction

in the nature of things, the question arises, "By what part of our nature, by which of the various activities or capacities of the human mind do we recognize these distinctions?" What, at bottom, are the judgements that we usually call moral judgements? Are they merely attempts to express in words a particular kind of feeling or emotion, or are they a specific kind of intellectual judgement? Or are they neither the one nor the other—neither feeling nor thought nor any combination of the two, but something absolutely *sui generis*? This question may conveniently be called the question of the Moral Faculty.

(3) Granting that we know what in a general way we mean by calling an act right or wrong, there arises the further question, "How can we find out what particular acts are right and what acts are wrong? By what principle are we or ought we to be guided in calling particular acts right or wrong?" This question is generally known as the question of the Moral Criterion.

We shall find that these three questions are far from representing three separate and distinct enquiries. They are really aspects of one and the same fundamental problem; but the questions have not always presented themselves in this way, and it will tend to clearness if we discuss them separately, and in the order indicated. Before proceeding to do so, it will be well to say a word as to the relation of our Science to certain other Sciences with which it is closely connected.

The Science of Psychology deals with all the activities or aspects of our mental life—sensation, feeling, emotion, thought, volition. It aims at distinguishing these various sides of our mental nature, and discovering everything that can be discovered about them considered simply as facts of experience. It is clear that, since moral emotions, moral judgements, moral ideas are part of our mental life, they must from one

point of view fall within the province of Psychology, and attempts have often been made to treat Ethics simply as a branch of that Science. But this is possible only from the point of view of those who deny any real truth or validity to such ideas as "ought," "right," "wrong." A knowledge of psychological facts must obviously be the basis of any sound system of Ethics: it must supply the data for Ethics, since all that we know about right and wrong is derived from the facts of conscious life, but it can never take the place of Ethics. Psychology has nothing to do with the truth or validity of our thoughts or ideas; for Psychology an erroneous judgement or a logical fallacy is just as much a fact as a true judgement or a valid inference. Psychology as such knows of no distinction between them; it has got to explain their occurrence as so many events in time related in certain constant ways to other events. Directly we raise the question of validity, we enter upon the province of Logic. Equally little has Psychology to do with the validity of our ethical judgements. Whether I am or am not capable of desiring something besides pleasure, whether I have or have not a sense of duty, whether there is or is not such a thing as a "sense of obligation" in my mind—these are no doubt questions for the Psychologist to consider, and it is of the utmost importance for Ethics that they should be decided rightly; but the question whether I *ought* to desire something besides pleasure, whether there is any truth or validity in my idea of duty, whether there is anything in the nature of things corresponding to the sense of obligation, or whether, on the other hand, such ideas as duty or moral obligation are as much subjective fictions as the notion of a chimera or of a fairy—these are questions about which the Psychologist as such has nothing to say. The question of validity is for another Science. From this point of view Ethics (like

Logic and *Æsthetics* (the Science of the Beautiful), is sometimes called a normative Science—since it does not deal simply with matters of fact, but aims at providing a “norm” or pattern, which our judgements and our actions ought to follow. The phrase undoubtedly corresponds to a real distinction between these Sciences and any branch of Natural Science; but it must not be taken to imply that in these Sciences we are not dealing with real matters of fact or objective truth. If the distinctions “true and false,” “right and wrong,” “beautiful and ugly” are really valid distinctions, *i.e.* if moral and *æsthetic* judgements admit of any absolute truth or falsehood, they express facts about the ultimate nature of Reality as much as the Sciences which deal with matters of a physical or a psychological character.

The Science of Metaphysic deals with the most ultimate of all questions—the ultimate nature of Reality, of Being and of Knowing, and of the relation between them. From one point of view it might seem that Ethics, being concerned not with Reality in general but with one particular department or aspect of Reality, has no closer connection with Metaphysic than any other of the special Sciences, each of which deals with some special department or aspect of Reality—Mathematics with quantity and number, Physics with mass and motion, Chemistry with the ultimate composition of material things, &c. But the ideas of good and evil, if valid at all, represent such a very important aspect of Reality in general, and our views about them depend so closely upon our theory about the ultimate nature of Reality in general and the nature and validity of knowledge in general, that in practice it is scarcely possible to keep the subjects altogether apart. No thorough-going discussion as to the nature of Reality in general can fail to give some account of the parti-

cular aspect of Reality which is expressed by the terms "right and wrong," "good and evil"; no thorough-going account of the nature of Morality can fail to connect itself very closely with a general theory of the Universe. Hence no great Metaphysician has failed to deal in some way, however incidentally, with Ethics, while the greatest writers on Ethics have also been writers on general Metaphysics or Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> There are, however, some special questions connected with Ethics which have no very close connection with Metaphysics—notably the question of the Moral Criterion, and this question has often been neglected by those who have regarded Ethics merely as a branch of Metaphysics. Questions of classification are in the main questions of convenience. Ethics may best be regarded as a branch of Philosophy (and this fact recommends the use of the old-fashioned term Moral Philosophy), but as a special branch of it, distinct from, though very closely connected with, Metaphysics.

There is one very practical reason why it is impossible to deal with Ethics without raising metaphysical questions. It might no doubt be possible to assume that we can trust our moral ideas, and to go on to enquire what in detail these ideas are; just as the Geometrician assumes that there are such things as space and quantity, and that we know in a general way what they are, and proceeds to analyse our actual notions about them in detail. But there is this difficulty in the way of adopting a similar attitude in dealing with Ethics. It would certainly be held by many philosophers that there are systems of Metaphysic which undermine the validity

<sup>1</sup> The term Philosophy is generally employed to denote the whole group of Philosophical Sciences—Logic, Ethics, Æsthetics, Politics, Sociology, perhaps Psychology—as well as Metaphysic, but Metaphysic may be described as *par excellence* the Philosophical Science, and the term Philosophy is sometimes used practically to mean Metaphysic.

of all our knowledge and reduce the conclusions of Science to mere subjective illusions. But in practice such speculations exercise little or no influence upon the respect with which the positive or physical Sciences are treated, even by the upholders of such sceptical or destructive philosophies. A teacher of Arithmetic may be in Philosophy a disciple of Hume or Mill, and as such may declare that it is not absolutely certain that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but in practice he would never think of sparing the rod if one of his pupils did his sums on that principle. In Ethics unfortunately it cannot be assumed that speculative views as to the ultimate basis of the Science exercise no influence upon men's practical attitude towards its conclusions. The validity of our ethical thinking is often explicitly denied on what are really metaphysical grounds, and a full and complete answer to such doubts or denials cannot be given without going into metaphysical discussions. We cannot establish the validity of one particular kind of thinking without discussing the nature and validity of all thinking; and historically there has generally been the closest possible connection—all the closer in proportion as the thinker is consistent and thorough-going—between a philosopher's views on Ethics and his theory of the Universe in general. In the present little work, however, there will be no room for much discussion of these ultimate questions. Metaphysical questions will be as far as possible avoided; but there will be no attempt to present the reader with an Ethic which does not—for those who think the matter out to the bottom—involve metaphysical implications or consequences. We shall be occupied mainly with asking what we actually do think about this particular department of Reality; while, in answer to doubts as to whether our thinking is valid, we shall have for the most part to be content with as much Metaphysic as is implied in pointing out

that there is no more reason for doubting the truth or validity of our thought about right and wrong than for doubting the validity of any other department of our knowledge. For more detailed discussion of such ultimate doubts the reader must be referred to works explicitly dealing with Logic and Metaphysic.

In saying that Ethics is connected in the closest possible way with Metaphysic, we have implied in effect that it is not unconnected with Theology; for Theology is, from the scientific point of view, only another name for Metaphysic or one particular branch or aspect of Metaphysic.<sup>1</sup> For the reasons already given, ideas of right and wrong cannot but be affected by our conception of the nature of the Universe in general; and the question whether there is a God and what is His nature is the most fundamental question that we can ask about the nature of the Universe. What is the exact character of this connection between the two Sciences, what is the bearing of Ethics upon Theology and of Theology upon Ethics, are questions which had best be considered later on. Meanwhile, I will only say that in our enquiry as to the nature of right and wrong, we shall make no theological assumptions. We shall start simply with this fact of experience—that we do as a matter of fact give moral judgements, that we call and think acts right and wrong, and proceed to ask what at bottom we mean by so doing, and what are the things or actions to which we apply or ought to apply these terms. The answer we give to this question may be of great importance for our general conception of Reality; but we shall start with no assumptions as to that Reality except what is implied in the ordinary, generally

<sup>1</sup> In practice Theology is usually held to include the history of one or all of the great historical Religions, their doctrines and their literature, even when the philosophical point of view is not ignored altogether.

acknowledged facts of human life. Let us proceed, then, with our enquiry into the ultimate nature of these familiar distinctions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RIGHT, THE GOOD, AND THE PLEASANT

WE have so far assumed that Ethics is concerned with the conception both of the good and of the right without determining exactly the relation between the two ideas. We shall perhaps find that ultimately the two notions involve one another; but there is this *prima facie* difference between them. The term "good" is applicable to many things besides human action; the term "right" can only be applied to actions. We can and do pronounce many things to be good besides human acts—things which may or may not be due to voluntary action. We do commonly think of right acts as good; but we may also say that pleasure or knowledge are good, no matter whether they are thought to be caused by anyone or not; only voluntary acts can be called right. Now the Science of Ethics is concerned—at least primarily—with conduct; and so far our primary concern is with the meaning of the right or of what we commonly call "duty." The question then arises whether this notion is something distinctive (or *sui generis*) or whether it can be resolved into any other conception. Now that is a question which can only be ascertained by introspection. We must ask whether we do or do not possess a distinctive idea of duty which is irresolvable into anything more ultimate. I believe that we do find in our minds such a distinct conception. This is at bottom the meaning of Kant's famous assertion that Duty is a Categorical Imperative,<sup>1</sup> whatever may be

<sup>1</sup> A Categorical Imperative is opposed by Kant to a Hypothetical Imperative. By a Hypothetical Imperative he means a command



thought of some of the doctrines which were associated with that formula in the mind of the author. We may identify the word Duty with "the right" or "the reasonable" or "the conduct that is categorically commanded," or the like, but such expressions are mere synonyms, not definitions. They all express the same fundamental notion. If "right" and "wrong" are ultimate notions, they cannot be defined in terms which do not imply them, any more than such terms as "being," "equal," "greater," "space," "cause," "quality," "quantity." "I am aware," says Henry Sidgwick, "that some persons will be disposed to answer all the preceding argument [as to the nature of ethical judgements] by a simple denial that they can find in their consciousness any such unconditional or categorical imperative as I have been trying to exhibit. If that is really the final result of self-examination in any case, there is no more to be said. I, at least, do not know how to impart that idea of moral obligation to anyone who is entirely devoid of it." <sup>1</sup>

There arises the further question whether this idea is intelligible by itself, or whether it does not involve the further notion of *good*. This will depend upon the answer we give to the question how we ascertain what particular actions are right—whether particular acts can be seen to be right apart altogether from their consequences, or whether the only acts which we can regard

to do a certain act on a condition, *i.e.* as a means to some end: "do this if you desire happiness," or "if you want to be perfect," or "if you want to go to Heaven." If I do not happen to desire the end, there is for me no obligation to adopt the means. The use of the term "Categorical Imperative" does not (as will be seen from what follows in the text) necessarily imply that the act is not done for the sake of a further end (though Kant himself at times assumes that such is the case), but it does imply that the end to which the act is a means is one which all rational beings as such are bound to pursue.

<sup>1</sup> *The Methods of Ethics*, 6th ed., p. 35.

as right are acts which conduce to the good. To hold this last view does not at all involve giving up the distinctive or *sui generis* character of the idea of right or duty. For both notions really involve the fundamental conception of an "ought." If we accept this view, we shall say that the notion of good is the notion of something which ought to be or which possesses intrinsic value; the notion "right" will then imply a voluntary act which ought to be done as a means to this ultimate good, whatever that may be. The two terms will be correlative terms which mutually imply one another (just as the convex implies the concave, or as the term "father" is only intelligible if we know the meaning of "son"): right acts will then mean acts which are means to the good;<sup>1</sup> the good will mean an end which ought to be realized, and which every right voluntary action tends to realize. We may postpone for the present the question whether these two terms do stand in this relation to one another, and concern ourselves only with the more fundamental question whether the idea of "rightness" implied in both terms is a valid one.<sup>2</sup>

Now when we are concerned with the existence or the validity of some ultimate concept or (as it is sometimes called) "category" of human thought, the only argument that can be used is to appeal to one's own actual consciousness, and to the consciousness of other people so far as that is revealed to us by their words or acts. I can therefore only appeal to a reader who is doubtful on this point to look into his own consciousness, and ask himself whether he does not as confidently pro-

<sup>1</sup> It will still be possible from this point of view that *some* acts may have a value in themselves and so be part of the good.

<sup>2</sup> There are, as will be seen below, some thinkers who do not conceive of the relation between "right" and "good" in this way: a few of them would say that nothing can properly be called good but a good act. Kant, however, did not hold this view, though it is frequently attributed to him.

nounce (say) such and such an act of benevolence to be right, or such and such an act of cruelty to be wrong, as he pronounces that nothing can happen without a cause or that there is such a thing as quantity, that two and two make four or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. We are not now concerned with the question how or on what grounds we know which particular acts are right or which particular acts we judge to be right; the only question is whether we do not pronounce, whether we cannot help thinking, some acts to be right, and attach a meaning to the judgement. If we do, we have the only proof that can be given either of the existence of the concept or of its validity. We can no more *prove* the existence of the validity of the idea of Duty to anyone who denies it than we can prove the existence of quantity to anyone who declares that the word is to him a word without meaning or the name merely of a delusion which most people entertain. The most that can be done is to examine some of the attempts which have been made to explain away this ultimate conception. Some of these attempts will be best dealt with in the next chapter upon the Moral Consciousness: in the present chapter I shall confine myself to the attempts which have been made to identify the conception of the good with that of the pleasant.

From the earliest dawn of serious reflection there have been persons who have maintained that pleasure is the only good. That was the position of the very early Cyrenaic philosophers and of the later Epicureans, of Hobbes in the seventeenth century, of Bentham and his followers at the beginning of the nineteenth. This position is usually called Hedonism or (since the rise of the Benthamite school) Utilitarianism. It is important to notice that not every kind of Utilitarianism denies the validity and the distinctive meaning of the idea of

Duty. It may be held that there is a real meaning in the term "duty," but that we find out what our duty is by asking which acts will produce most pleasure—it may be our own pleasure (egoistic Hedonism) or it may be that of Society in general (Universalistic Hedonism). Indeed, anyone who attaches any real meaning to the doctrine "pleasure is good" really implies that the term "good" does *mean* something besides "pleasant," though in point of fact nothing is ultimately<sup>1</sup> good but pleasure: otherwise his statement would be a mere tautology: he would be saying merely "pleasure is pleasant." For the moment we are concerned merely with the view which absolutely identifies the good and the pleasant, which treats good and pleasant as simply two alternative names for the same idea.

The attempt is frequently made to support this view by a particular psychological theory that we do and can desire nothing but pleasure. That doctrine was maintained by Bentham and (with less consistency) by his disciple John Stuart Mill. In the popular mind Bentham's name is generally associated with the famous phrase "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." It is less generally known that Bentham held it to be a psychological impossibility for anyone to desire the greatest happiness of the greatest number except as a means to his own happiness, happiness being assumed to be synonymous with pleasure. One's own maximum pleasure is the only possible object of human desire, and consequently the only possible aim of human action. When Bentham declared that the proper aim of human conduct was the greatest happiness of the greatest number, he merely meant that this was the rule which the majority (in its own interest) tries to force upon the individual: the individual will only act

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* good otherwise than as a means to pleasure which alone is good in and for itself.

upon this principle in so far as his own personal tastes or the "sanctions" of law, public opinion, or Religion turn what conduces to the general pleasure into the pleasantest (or apparently pleasantest) course for himself. Bentham was himself a devoted and laborious philanthropist : his explanation of his own conduct was simply that he happened to be so constituted as to find as much amusement in writing books on law reform as other men found in hunting or shooting. It is clear that, if Bentham is right, right conduct can only mean *either* conduct which conduces to my pleasure *or* conduct which, because it conduces to *their* pleasure, the majority have agreed to call right, and to impose (so far as they can) upon me and upon other individuals. What are the grounds of this theory ?

The theory, be it remembered, is a purely psychological theory. We are not now concerned with the question whether anything besides pleasure is the right or proper object of human desire, but simply whether, as a matter of fact, any persons ever do desire something else. And here it is clear that the question can only be settled for each man by looking into his own consciousness and asking whether he does always desire nothing but pleasure, and whether, if we look round upon the conduct of humanity in general, we can explain that conduct upon the supposition that all the heroisms and martyrdoms recorded by history, and all the commonplace self-sacrifice of soldiers and of mothers, were really inspired by nothing but a desire for some pleasure, or (as the consistent form of the theory holds) for maximum pleasure. It will be impossible here to examine all the fallacies and sophistications which account for the prevalence of this theory. It must suffice to point out the mistake which has probably played the largest part in making the theory seem plausible. The fallacy has been called the

“hysteron-proteron”<sup>1</sup> of the hedonistic Psychology: it puts the cart before the horse. The element of truth which the theory distorts is the undoubted fact that the satisfaction of any desire whatever necessarily gives pleasure, and that, in looking forward to the satisfaction of a desire, we do necessarily think of the satisfaction as pleasant; but in the case of “disinterested” desires, the pleasure is dependent upon the previous existence of a desire. If the good Samaritan cared about the present feelings or the future welfare of the man fallen among thieves, it would no doubt give him some pleasure to satisfy that desire for his welfare; if he had desired his good as little as the priest and the Levite, there would have been nothing to suggest the strange idea that to relieve him, to bind up his nasty wounds, and to spend money upon him, would be a source of more pleasure to himself than to pass by on the other side and spend the money upon himself. In the case of the great majority of our pleasures, it will probably be found that the desire is the condition of the pleasure, not the pleasure of the desire. That is not the case with all desires: pleasure is *one* of the things which we may desire, but most pleasures spring from the satisfaction of a desire for something else than the pleasure. Put a toothsome morsel upon the palate of the extremest ascetic: he will necessarily experience pleasure, no matter how little he may have desired that morsel. Make incisions in his flesh, and he will necessarily experience pain. On the other hand, Benevolence is a source of pleasure only to the benevolent man—to the man who has previously desired his neighbour’s good. To the man who has no such desire, or who may even desire other men’s pains, such conduct would bring no pleasure at all. The existence of disinterested male-

<sup>1</sup> From the term used in grammar to indicate the usage of putting what logically comes first last, *e.g.* the cart before the horse.

volence is as well established a psychological fact as the existence of disinterested benevolence.

It is important to remember that "disinterested" desires are not necessarily good desires; the great majority of our desires, good, bad, and indifferent, are "disinterested" in this technical sense, *i.e.* they are desires of objects for their own sake, and not merely as means to the pleasure which will undoubtedly accompany their satisfaction. It is the great merit of Bishop Butler to have pointed out (as against Hobbes) this important psychological fact; until his time it used commonly to be assumed (*e.g.* by Aristotle) that altruistic or other more or less exalted desires were the only exceptions to the law that each man pursues his own maximum pleasure. Bishop Butler for the first time pointed out that by far the greater number of our pleasures spring from the satisfaction of desires which are not desires for pleasure. All the strongest human passions—love, hate, anger, revenge, ambition—are quite inexplicable on the assumption that men naturally desire nothing but pleasure. If the hedonistic Psychology fails to explain the highest achievements of human nature, it is equally true that the greatest crimes and atrocities would be unintelligible if man were habitually guided, as the hedonistic Psychology assumes him to be guided, by an enlightened regard for his greatest pleasure on the whole.

Sometimes the attempt is made to show that in some mysterious way Altruism has been evolved out of Egoism. Primitive man, it is suggested, was purely egoistic, but by some process of association or the like, he has now come to be altruistic. It will be impossible to examine all the confusions and fallacies which underlie this attempt in such writers as J. S. Mill. I will only point out: (1) that the attempt, even if successful, would not alter the fact that mankind is not

wholly egoistic *now*, whatever he may once have been ; (2) that the hedonistic Psychology is even more hopelessly at variance with psychological facts when applied to primitive man, to the lower animals, or to the human infant, than it is as an explanation of conduct in civilized adults. If the hedonistic Psychology were true, everyone must have been starved in early infancy. A young animal could not survive without sucking, and it would never, on this theory, have begun to suck until it had some reason to suppose that sucking would be a source of pleasure. Such knowledge it could only obtain from experience, and such experience it could not possibly possess a few hours after birth. A young animal sucks because it has an impulse<sup>1</sup> to suck : no doubt when it is found that sucking in the right place is pleasant, the impulse is strengthened ; just as it would be weakened, at least when intelligence has reached a certain development, had it been found to be painful. Animals, infants, and to a considerable extent primitive men, are governed by instincts, though in the case of man the instincts are modified by the gradual development of intelligence ; and instinctive action is as little egoistic as it is altruistic. The actions of the lower animals, and to a large extent of primitive man, are chiefly governed by such appetites as hunger and thirst and the sexual impulse, by the spontaneous impulses to walk, or run, or fly, and at a higher stage of development, to play : by the instincts of imitation, self-display, or revenge ; by social instincts, of which the most powerful and primitive is the maternal instinct ; by the gregarious instinct and the love of kind ; by resentment or the blind impulse to revenge an injury. Physiologically speaking, some of these instincts are directed primarily to self-preservation, others to the preservation of the species ; but the animal itself is not aware of the

<sup>1</sup> Some modern psychologists would say a " conative disposition."



tendency. With growing intelligence instincts pass into desires, in which there is a continuously increasing awareness of the object aimed at and of the further consequences of its attainment. The more self-regarding instincts are more and more controlled by a growing desire of the man's well-being as a whole, while the social instincts pass into devotion to family, tribe, country, and, ultimately, to the welfare of humanity at large. But neither the extremest egoism nor the loftiest altruism extinguishes a host of other particular desires, in the gratification of which most of our pleasures have to be sought, though in the more developed mind these desires may be more or less completely subordinated to the dominating desire of promoting the good on the whole—it may be of self, it may be of others.

The defenders of Hedonism have often based their theory upon the supposed psychological truth that every desire is a desire of pleasure; but it is just the more serious attention to Psychology—particularly the Psychology of the lower animals and of primitive man—that has led to the practical disappearance of the doctrine known as the hedonistic Psychology from the pages even of the most naturalistically minded moralists.

But it must not be supposed that to get rid of the hedonistic Psychology necessarily disposes of Hedonism. It is clear that, so long as we accept that Psychology, we are necessarily committed to Hedonism in Ethics. If we *can* desire nothing but our own pleasure, it is clearly senseless to maintain that we *ought* to desire something else. But if it is admitted that we can and sometimes do desire other things besides pleasure—knowledge, æsthetic gratification, other people's well-being, our own virtue; if moreover it be admitted that even when we desire pleasure, we desire one pleasure more than another without its being necessarily greater in amount, then it becomes perfectly possible to main-

tain that any one or all of these desired objects are good. On the other hand, we may still, if we like, maintain that only pleasure is really good ; only in that case we must not pretend that our doctrine is in any way derived from or based upon experience. We are really pronouncing an a priori moral judgement when we say that pleasure alone is good, as much as when we say that virtue and knowledge are good. And the very fact that we do so judge involves the admission that we attach a meaning to the term good which is not the same as that of pleasure. Experience can tell us what is pleasant : it cannot tell us whether what is pleasant is reasonably or rightly to be desired, and that is what we mean when we say that "pleasure is desirable or good." If we do make that judgement, and mean by it something more than that pleasure is pleasant, we are pronouncing a judgement which does not rest upon experience in the ordinary sense of the word, and so may be called an a priori judgement, or (if anyone dislikes the associations of that term) an *immediate* judgement. The judgement "pleasure alone is good" is just as much a priori or immediate as the judgement "virtue is good."

There is another way of evading the admission that there is in the human mind a distinctive notion of "good" which cannot be analysed away into anything else. By many writers of the present day "the good" is identified with the satisfactory. It is admitted that our desires are not all desires for pleasure, and that we do not always prefer the most pleasant satisfactions to the less pleasant. Some things satisfy more permanent, more deep-seated, more fundamental desires and aspirations than others. When a high-minded man prefers the satisfaction of some altruistic or more ideal desire in preference to some fleeting passion or to the desire

for ease and comfort, it is because he finds it in the long run more "satisfactory" to do so. All satisfaction is good, but some satisfactions satisfy more than others. Some Idealists appear to adopt this view, but it is particularly characteristic of the Pragmatists. The Philosophy known as Pragmatism often strikes the superficial reader as a particularly edifying and ethical Philosophy, since it tends to resolve the idea of truth into that of goodness. The only meaning of saying that some statement is true is that we can secure some good by acting upon it. It is not noticed that, if the notion of objective truth—a truth that does not mean simply what you or I find it convenient to assume—is treated as a delusion, there can be as little room for truth in Ethics as in Logic; the statement "virtue is good" is as little true as any other statement: and it is hardly realized that after all the good means for such philosophers nothing more than that which chances to satisfy *my* desire—any and every desire of mine. I cannot but feel that the identification of the good with the satisfactory—even in the mouths of professedly Idealistic thinkers—really means one of two things. Either it is a better-sounding name for the pleasant: or, when we are told that one satisfaction is a satisfaction of the "deeper," "more permanent" or "more universal" self, or the like, such expressions are mere disguises for that fundamental and unanalysable distinction between "higher" and "lower," "better" and "worse," which is ostensibly denied. The self which is really made into the supreme judge is simply the rational self: the satisfaction which is pronounced the most "satisfactory" is the satisfaction of this rational self—in other words, of the Moral Consciousness.

Let us examine the language used by the late Prof. William James in speaking of the moral life. He tells

us explicitly that "the essence of good is to satisfy demand."<sup>1</sup> And yet he admits that for the ethical philosopher—and presumably for non-philosophers who have some desire to rationalize their conduct—"the guiding principle for ethical philosophy (since all demands conjointly cannot be satisfied in this poor world)" must be "simply to satisfy *as many demands as we can.*" "That act must be the best act, accordingly, which makes for the *best whole*, in the sense of awakening the least sense of dissatisfaction."<sup>2</sup> Now this seems to me distinctly to imply that it did appear to Prof. James, as to others, that there was something self-evidently rational in producing a greater amount of good rather than a lesser one, no matter whose good it is. And this indifference as to whether the good is my good or somebody else's implies that I am looking upon the matter objectively—from the point of view of disinterested reason rather than that of personal desire. I may still, no doubt, be seeking to satisfy myself, but that in myself which I am seeking to satisfy is simply a demand for rationality in conduct. We may doubt whether James did, as he seems to think, really regard all "demands" as on a level—in other words, treat all satisfactions as equally good, but it is at least clear that he had at the bottom of his mind just that same notion of good, as something which objectively ought to be, which lies at the basis of such ethical systems as Kant's. No doubt I shall not act upon this "instinct of rationality" except in proportion as I desire to be rational, but I could not be influenced by an instinct of rationality unless my Reason were capable of recognizing that a "good" or "rational" end means something more than "that which you or I happen to desire." If I recognize that something which another desires is good though I do not desire it

<sup>1</sup> *The Will to Believe*, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

myself, that implies that to pronounce something good is something other than to say "I desire it." If all that "good" meant were that somebody else desires it, there would be no reason whatever for my so acting as to secure a maximum satisfaction of other men's desires. If I do recognize that that which is much desired ought to be, that is to say something much more and quite different from simply "it is much desired." It is true that I shall not act on this principle unless it satisfies some "demand" in myself, but the demand is simply the demand that what ought to be shall be. I shall not be influenced by that demand unless I desire to bring the good into existence, but the very fact that I am capable of feeling such a desire shows that in calling a thing good I do not mean simply that I or anybody else desires it.

I will notice one last attempt to reconcile the obvious facts of the moral life with the non-recognition of any distinctive concept of good or right. It is sometimes contended that, though pleasure is the only thing that can or ought to be desired, some pleasures are higher than other pleasures. This position may be illustrated by the well-known passage in J. S. Mill's *Utilitarianism* :

"It will be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.

"If I am asked what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all, or almost all, who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. . . .

“ Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of, appreciating and enjoying both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast’s pleasures ; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs. They would not resign what they possess more than he, for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with him. . . . It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied ; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know one side of the question.”<sup>1</sup>

It may easily be shown that these admissions really give up the hedonistic Psychology altogether. If all we care about is pleasure, it cannot matter to us of what sort that pleasure is, provided we have enough of it. The hedonistic doctrine is precisely that in estimating the value of different states of consciousness we attach, or reasonably ought to attach, importance to nothing but their pleasantness. When we make abstraction of every characteristic of the pleasant consciousness except its pleasantness, there is nothing left which could possibly induce us to prefer the pleasantness of one state to the pleasantness of another except its being greater in amount, *i.e.* in intensity, or duration, or in both respects taken together. One abstract pleasantness can differ from another only in being more

<sup>1</sup> *Utilitarianism*, pp. 11-14.

pleasant. If a man does care of what sort his pleasure is, if he thinks it better to enjoy intellectual or benevolent pleasures rather than sensual or selfish ones, he does not care about pleasure *only*; he cares about something else in the pleasant state besides its pleasantness. If he prefers a higher pleasure to a lower which is greater in amount, he is caring about the *height* of the pleasure, not about the pleasantness of it merely. To hold that *some* pleasure is the good is not to be a Hedonist. And a man who judges that some pleasures are better than other equally or more pleasant pleasures clearly does not identify the good and the pleasant. He implies that the good means to him something more than the pleasant. He implies that, though pleasure may be an element in every state of consciousness which is ultimately good, the goodness of that state is not to be measured merely by that pleasantness. Mill's words supply an excellent description of the actual moral consciousness of a high-minded man, but they are fatal to the dogma which as a Hedonist he professed to accept.

We cannot therefore reconcile Hedonism with the moral standard which Mill practically recognizes by adopting his distinction between higher and lower pleasure. Even to admit higher pleasures is to admit that there is something in the good besides pleasure. What precisely that something is we shall have to consider more fully in our chapter on the moral criterion. I will only say here, by way of anticipation, that most of those who deny that pleasure is the only good would give the highest place among goods to Morality or virtue or the goodwill or character (these are only so many different ways of expressing the same thing). They regard the individual good act or the good character—that is, the bent of the will which that act reveals—as in itself a

good, as an end in itself, as intrinsically worth having. Some of them would even go so far as to say that nothing but virtue is the good, but these would find it difficult to say why (if that be so) it is generally considered a duty to promote other people's happiness as well as to make them better. Most anti-hedonistic moralists would admit that pleasure is good. Some would add knowledge and the appreciation of Beauty, the cultivation of the intellectual and æsthetic side of our nature, and perhaps many other things. There is, as has already been pointed out, no way of proving conclusively which of these views is right. The reader can only be invited to analyse his own actual moral judgements, and ask what view they imply as to the real nature of the good. A further consideration of this question had best be postponed till we deal with the problem which we have not yet finally discussed—the question, “Granted that I ought to do my duty, how am I to know in what particular acts that duty consists?” But before leaving the question of Hedonism, I should like to point out an element of truth in that doctrine to which it owes much of the plausibility it possesses for many minds. Hedonism recognizes the undoubted fact that nothing can be supposed to possess ultimate value except some kind of consciousness. For a world of mere machines there could be no such thing as good or evil, worth or unworth. We could imagine a world which would look to an outside spectator exactly like our world, but in which there was no consciousness at all. The men and women in it might behave much as they do now; their bodily movements might correspond or fail to correspond to certain rules. Such automatic men might eat and drink immoderately or moderately, kill each other or keep each other alive, sweat each other or pay them good wages, keep their money



in their pockets or build hospitals, stay at home or go to church. All the external machinery of social life, of charity, or of religion might be theirs. But in such a world there would be nothing good or valuable, nothing bad or unvaluable; and in such a world, consequently, there would be no right or wrong acts, no Morality. Acts can only be called right or wrong in so far as they represent some state of a conscious agent which has value in itself, or in so far as they lead to some conscious state in the agent himself or in another being. This has hardly ever been seriously denied, but it is sometimes forgotten when people talk about Morality as though it meant the mere external conformity to a rule, whether that rule is thought of as an abstract moral law or as the will of God.<sup>1</sup> Hedonists sometimes criticize the position that virtue is good as though it involved some such notion, but no believer in the intrinsic goodness of virtue would for a moment admit that this was so. It is not an abstract conformity of his acts with a law that he pronounces valuable, but the virtuous state of consciousness—the conscious direction of his will to an end. The question at issue between Hedonists and their opponents is “What in consciousness is intrinsically valuable: is it merely its pleasantness or is it also a certain state of the will and a certain state of intellect?” There are three sides or aspects of all consciousness—intellection, volition or conation, feeling. The Hedonist isolates the feeling aspect of consciousness from all the rest, and pronounces that in feeling nothing is valuable but its pleasantness. The question is whether these other aspects of consciousness must not also be taken into consideration in determining the absolute and the relative value of different states of conscious

<sup>1</sup> Unless, indeed, it were held that the acts produced some effect upon the Divine Consciousness.

being—whether the rightly directed state of will may not have a value as well as pleasant feeling, knowledge as well as the pleasure which usually accompanies knowledge. If we were to conclude that this is so, we should not in any way be giving up the position that nothing but consciousness can be valuable in and for itself.

I have tried in this chapter to show that there is no satisfactory method of explaining away this ultimate fact of consciousness that we do pronounce moral judgements—judgements of a distinctive kind which cannot be analysed or resolved into any other kind of judgement or any other kind of conscious experience—into judgements about the pleasantness of our conscious states (which is of course a mere matter of sensibility) or into mere desires which may happen to be stronger than other desires. If we do pronounce such judgements, that implies that we have distinct categories or notions both of the good and of the right. If so, there must be some distinctive faculty or capacity of our nature which is capable of pronouncing such judgements. What is the nature of that capacity? That will be the subject of our next chapter.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

IN the present chapter I propose to discuss the question which is sometimes stated in the form, "What is the moral faculty?" The word faculty is sometimes objected to for reasons which it would take too long to point out now: it is associated with a particular kind

of obsolete Psychology usually condemned under the name of the "faculty Psychology," which is supposed to regard the different activities of the human mind as wholly separate organs, as distinct from one another as the different organs of the body, or more so, and to forget the unity of the self to which all these activities belong. Here the term is used to mean no more than "capacity." If we do pronounce the distinctive moral judgements of which I have been speaking, it is clear that we must have a capacity of doing so: for it is certain that we can do nothing that we had not previously a capacity for doing. The only question that can be raised is: "To what part of our nature does this capacity belong? Whence come these moral judgements? What sort of psychological facts at bottom are they?" Among those who do in some sense or degree recognize the distinctive character of our moral judgements, considered simply as psychological facts, there have been three main answers to the question:

(1) There are those who regard them as due to a particular kind of feeling or sensibility—a *moral sense* comparable to the five bodily senses or to the sense of beauty. The moral judgement merely expresses the fact that such feelings are actually experienced. Moral approbation and disapprobation are feelings of a particular kind, excited by the contemplation of certain acts—our own or other people's.

(2) There are those who regard moral judgements as springing from the intellectual part of our nature and who speak of the moral faculty as Reason or Practical Reason.

(3) There are those who speak of the moral faculty as something wholly *sui generis*—neither any kind of feeling or emotion or any kind of thought or intellection, and who refuse to call the moral faculty anything but Conscience.

This last view may be set aside as being really unintelligible. It has hardly been explicitly maintained by any writer of importance except the late Dr. Martineau; and, when his arguments are examined, it will be found that all that he really means to insist upon is the fact that our moral judgements are judgements of a very distinctive character—sharply distinguishable from judgements about ordinary matters of fact. This is no doubt true and important, but it is not denied by those who ascribe such judgements to the Reason or the intellectual part of our nature. Because space and time are different, and spacial properties are apprehended by the intellect, it does not follow that our ideas of time are derived from some faculty which is not intellect. Practically, the choice lies between the two first views. It must not, of course, be supposed that either of these schools necessarily deny the existence of what is popularly called Conscience. It should be observed, however, that in ordinary language Conscience is usually used to indicate not merely the faculty of knowing what we ought to do but also the whole complex of emotions and impulses which impel us to the doing of what we know to be right or deter us from the doing of what we know to be wrong. When we talk about Conscience “remonstrating” or “rebuking” or “enjoining” or “impelling,” we clearly mean to imply some kind of emotional impulse or desire as well as mere knowledge. The question before us now is the question, “By means of what faculty or activity or part of my nature do I *know* what I ought to do?” Or, more strictly, the question may be stated thus: “Is the consciousness of right and wrong really knowledge at all or is it only some kind of feeling or emotion?”

The view that moral judgements are essentially rational judgements was the view of Plato and of Platonists in

all ages—of the greatest Schoolmen, of the old English Rationalists such as Cudworth, Cumberland, and Clarke, of Kant and Hegel, and almost all modern Idealists. It has generally been the view of those who emphasize strongly the functions of Reason as distinct from sensible experience in their general theory of knowledge, and who emphasize and make much of the idea of moral obligation. Those philosophers, on the other hand, who tend towards Empiricism or Sensationalism—who derive all knowledge from experience and for whom experience practically means sensation—have usually been inclined to identify our moral judgements with some kind of feeling or emotion. If all knowledge is derived from sensation, it is clear that the idea of right and wrong cannot be derived from any other source. Sometimes, as has already been pointed out, the only feeling supposed to be capable of influencing human action has been held to be pleasure or the desire of it. From this point of view there can hardly be said to be a moral faculty or moral consciousness at all. The theory of a “moral sense” quite distinct from ordinary feelings of pleasure or pain or from any other emotion was for the first time put forward by the third Lord Shaftesbury, the famous author of the *Characteristics*, and more systematically by the Ulster philosopher, Francis Hutcheson. These two men are considered the founders of the “Moral Sense School” (sometimes spoken of as the “sentimental school”), but substantially the same view has often been maintained by others who do not actually use the term “Moral Sense.”

The importance of the question is apt not to be appreciated at first sight. If we have a faculty which can appreciate the difference between right and wrong, it may be suggested that it cannot matter what sort of

faculty it is. Whether you call it Reason or Sense may seem to be little more than a question of names. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." It is not recognized that to identify moral judgements with any kind of feeling must involve the total destruction of their objective character. "The term Sense," says Sidgwick, "suggests a capacity for feelings which may vary from A to B without either being in error, rather than a faculty of cognition; and it appears to me fundamentally important to avoid this suggestion. I have therefore thought it better to use the term Reason . . . to denote the faculty of moral cognition."<sup>1</sup> This point may require a little further explanation and illustration.

When a colour-blind man sees a red rose and pronounces it to be of the same colour as the neighbouring grass-plot, it really is the same for him. He is guilty of no error in his judgement, unless he mistakenly infers that it will appear the same to normal-sighted persons. Now, according to the moral sense school, when I pronounce an action wrong, all that is really meant is that it excites in my mind an "idea (*i.e.* a feeling) of disapprobation." But it is equally a fact that it may excite a feeling of approbation in another man's mind. A vivisectional experiment, for instance, will excite the liveliest feelings of approbation in the mind of an ardent student of Physiology, while it will excite a perfect storm of disapproving feeling in the mind of a strong Anti-vivisectionist. The point is not that there are no means of settling authoritatively which is right and which is wrong. On any view as to the nature of the moral faculty there are undoubtedly considerable differences of opinion about ethical questions. But, upon the "moral sense" view, it is perfectly meaningless to ask

<sup>1</sup> *Methods of Ethics*, p. 34.

the question—as meaningless as to ask which is right, the man who likes mustard or the man who dislikes it. Mustard is not objectively nice or objectively nasty; the whole truth about the matter is that it is nice to one person, nasty to another. Such judgements, we say, are of merely “subjective” validity; they represent the peculiarities of certain minds, not truths which must be equally true for all persons who are not in error about the matter. If moral judgements were simply feelings or emotions of a particular kind, they would be in exactly the same case. They would represent mere individual likings or dislikings. There could be no objective truth about matters of right and wrong. And this means that what we commonly call moral obligation would be a mere delusion. “Without objectivity,” in the words of Edouard von Hartmann, “there is no Morality.” And yet the very heart of the moral consciousness is precisely the conviction that there *is* an objective truth about the moral problem—that some acts are right and others wrong, no matter whether this or that person thinks so or not. This conviction involves, be it observed, no claim to personal infallibility on the part of the individual making the judgement. We may make mistakes about moral matters as we may make mistakes in doing a sum, or in estimating the rival claims of two scientific theories, or about the guilt or innocence of an accused person. But in these last cases it is universally admitted that there is a truth about the matter. When a long multiplication sum is given out to a class of thirty small boys, the answers will probably be found to differ. But the whole form will agree that the diverse answers cannot all be right. It never occurs to the most sceptical of small boys to say to the Master: “No doubt the answer is 336 for you and for the book, but I assure you that

for me these figures make 337." And nobody ever thinks of doubting the objective truth of the multiplication-table because particular small boys make mistakes, any more than they maintain that the question whether A and B committed a murder is merely a question of taste because juries, and even judges, occasionally convict innocent persons. We have a deep-seated conviction that it is even so with morals, however great may be the difficulty of pronouncing which course of action is right in particular cases. It is often indeed just when we are most in doubt what course of action is right, that we are surest that there is a right course, if only we could find it out. That is just what we mean by saying that an action is right, or that it ought to be done. We mean that every right-judging intelligence would necessarily judge it to be right. We actually think in this way, and the fact that we think so, and cannot but think so, is the only reason we can have for believing anything whatever to be true—whether in Mathematics, in Science, or in morals.

It is therefore a matter of vital importance to Ethics to maintain that the moral faculty is rational—that it belongs to the intellectual part of our nature, and is not a mere matter of feeling or emotion. The "distinctiveness" of a "sense" or feeling can give it no sort of superiority to other feelings. The feeling of self-disapprobation may be disagreeable, but the feeling occasioned by the rack or the thumb-screw may be more so: if anyone prefers to tell a lie and put up with the disagreeable feeling of remorse, it is impossible to give any reason why he should not do so. Hume saw quite clearly that on the moral sense view Morality must mean simply what other people feel about my conduct, and he was quite willing to accept the consequence: "Actions are not approved because they are moral:



they are moral because they are approved." The only objectivity which could possibly be claimed for a moral rule would be that it represents the opinion of the majority, and the fundamental principle of the resulting Ethic would be "Always shout with the largest crowd"—unless indeed you happen to be so constituted as to find the pleasure of self-approbation more satisfactory than that of popularity with its attendant results.

In spite of Hume's exhibition of its real tendency, the moral sense view or something like it has occasionally been maintained in modern times even by writers who do not really mean to acquiesce in its destructive consequences.<sup>1</sup> But of late years the Moralists who reduce all Morality to a mere matter of emotion are in general quite aware of what they are doing. And between their position and that of the old Moral Sense School there is this important difference. Hutcheson believed in a single, distinctively *moral* kind of feeling. Modern Emotionalists usually deny the existence of any such single *sui generis* feeling. Sometimes they have reduced all moral approbation to sympathy or altruistic emotion in general;<sup>2</sup> but the more recent upholders of the emotional view refuse to identify moral approbation or disapprobation with any one kind of emotion. They regard it rather as a complex product or amalgam of many different feelings or emotions—emotions closely connected with instincts which we have inherited from our animal ancestors. In Dr. McDougall's recent book on *Social Psychology*, for instance, it is insisted that it has its roots in the maternal instinct and other kinds of sympathetic or benevolent feeling, in the "sense of kind" or the gregarious instinct, but also in resentment, the imitative instinct, "positive and negative

<sup>1</sup> e.g. in Gizycki and Coit's *Manual of Ethical Philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> This, to a large extent, is true of J. S. Mill.

self-feeling"—all these complicated by fusion with one another.

It cannot be denied that the emotional view is at the strongest when put in this way. In the hands of modern Anthropologists and comparative Psychologists the case becomes indefinitely stronger than it was in the hands of the old "Moral Sense School" and their modern imitators. Anthropology is the real trump-card of the Emotionalist in modern times. It is when he turns from the question of what Morality *now* is (which he frequently forgets to examine) to the question of its origin that he is able to present the most plausible case. And it is quite impossible to deny that the above-mentioned instincts and their accompanying emotions really have much to do with the emergence of what we call Morality in a savage tribe. It cannot be denied that when we see a squirrel making a hoard of nuts and resenting any interference with it on the part of other squirrels, we see the germs which in primitive man developed into the idea of property and the moral condemnation of stealing. It is impossible to deny that punishment and the more primitive ideas about justice have their origin in the instinct of revenge. Marital jealousy has much to do with the growth of Monogamy and the various moral rules associated with it. And the social instincts which are exhibited in rudimentary forms even by the lower animals seem amply sufficient to account for that highest element in savage morality which is constituted by devotion to the interests of the family and the tribe. That these instincts and emotions do to a very large extent explain why particular acts first came to be thought right or wrong cannot be doubted. It may even be questioned whether the notion of right and wrong in general, as it exists in very primitive minds, represents anything

more than these emotions, from which certain general rules have been extracted by the savage himself or by the modern investigator. The very essence of Morality, as it presents itself to the developed human mind, is, as we have seen, this notion of an objective standard. But it is not easy to discover any such notion in the most primitive forms of Morality. Certainly we can only trace the barest germs of it in the mind of the savage, as it is admittedly wanting in that of the animal from which primitive man was evolved. But even if it were to be established that such a notion was *wholly* absent from savage Morality, that would not prove that *our* Morality is not something more. If it could be shown that Socrates' parents and all the men and women who had ever lived up to his time were absolutely destitute of what we understand by a sense of duty, that would not alter the fact that Socrates possessed such a consciousness of duty, nor would it in the smallest degree affect the validity of the concept. All our higher intellectual notions have emerged gradually in the history of the race, just as they emerge gradually in the development of the individual child. The intellectual concept of Duty has gradually super-vened upon the mere emotional impulses of primitive man, just as a rational concept of Causality has gradually taken the place of that mere "association of ideas" which enables the lower animals and the youngest infants to profit to some extent by their experiences. Of course when it is suggested that Socrates may have been the first man in whose consciousness the concept of duty emerged, the matter is put in an exaggerated way. In the intellectual world, as in the physical, Nature does not commonly make such violent leaps. The notion of an objective Morality can be discovered in literature that is much older than Socrates, and I

have no doubt that germs of it can be found in the ideas even of very primitive savages—especially in the most primitive notions of Justice. Still, it is important to recognize that Morality as it existed in the savage was mainly a matter of emotion, and that it is only in the mind of the developed human being that the notion can be discovered in a very explicit form ; but this admission throws no doubt whatever upon the truth of the rationalistic theory. We do not doubt the validity of the multiplication-table because the lower animals, and (it may be) some savages are incapable of recognizing its truth.

There are certain ethical propositions which appeal to the developed intelligence as no less self-evidently true than the proposition “two straight lines cannot inclose a space” or “ $2 + 2 = 4$ .” What these propositions are is a further question which will be discussed in our next chapter. I will only by anticipation say that to my own mind such propositions as “a large amount of good is intrinsically more valuable than a smaller,” or (what is the same thing) “ought always to be promoted in preference to a smaller,” or, again, the proposition that “pleasure is intrinsically more valuable than pain” are instances of such immediate or a priori judgements. When they are put into this abstract form, it is possible that writers who are pledged to the emotional view of Morality might deny that they found them self-evident ; but it would not be difficult to show that they are presupposed in the actual judgements which they pronounce upon conduct. Still more easy would it be to show from the writings of such men that they really believe in the objectivity of their own judgements. Such writers as Professor Westermarck may theoretically recognize that on their own view of the matter no such objectivity can be claimed for them ; but on almost

every page of their writings they constantly speak of a higher and lower Morality ; and they never appear to have any serious doubt that, where they differ, their own civilized notions of Morality are intrinsically higher and truer than those of a savage. In that absolutely unavoidable use of the terms "higher" and "lower" they betray the existence in their own mind of that very category of good the existence of which they deny with their lips.

On the whole, then, I believe that Rationalists are right against the Moral Sense School or any other kind of Emotionalism. At the same time Ethical Rationalists have often enormously exaggerated the purely rational character of our own actual moral judgements, and of the conduct which results from them. Thus—

(a) It has sometimes been forgotten that, though the judgement that an action is right comes from the Reason, the action cannot be actually performed without a desire. In some cases, no doubt, this desire is simply what Sidgwick calls a "desire to do what is right and reasonable as such." But this need not always be the case, even with the actions that we commonly regard as actions of the noblest type. We need not (with Kant) declare that the action of a man who sacrifices himself for his wife and family from pure disinterested affection possesses no moral value because it is not done from a pure sense of duty. Moral Reason may pronounce the act to be right and to possess high moral value, though the agent may not consciously and abstractly have reflected that it was his duty.

(b) It must not be supposed that even in determining what ought to be done the best men are always guided by a deliberate judgement of Reason. Men's ideas as to the particular things which they ought to do are

largely dependent upon custom or authority, or, in other cases, upon the influence of strong sympathetic and other emotions ; but even in men little influenced in their views as to what acts are right or wrong by consciously rational reflection and chiefly dominated by emotion, we can detect the notion of duty ; and we can detect the presence of rational conceptions in the moral consciousness of the community, even when the individual rarely does more than passively acquiesce in the ideal of his social environment. It is Reason that gives him the idea of duty, though he may be largely influenced by custom or feeling in judging what particular things are his duty. The more conscious and deliberate action of Reason comes in chiefly where there is a conflict between one emotion and another, or where some doubt has arisen as to whether the customary standard of morality is valid. A man like St. Francis of Assisi did not solve ethical problems by the sort of abstract reflection which dominated the conduct of Kant. He was chiefly influenced by such emotions as gratitude to Christ and sympathy for his fellow-men ; but he felt the inclination to selfishness, sloth, cowardice as much as other men, and the unselfish emotions prevailed over the selfish not simply (it is probable) because they were naturally stronger, but because he recognized them to be intrinsically higher. It was just in this judgment that the one kind of desire, or the action prompted by such desire, was higher than another that the moral Reason asserted itself. It must not be supposed that the ideal of human conduct is conduct uninfluenced by desire or emotion. The ideal function of Reason is not to suppress or extinguish the desires, but to control them—to choose between the higher and the lower impulse and to reinforce the higher. The ideal is no doubt that the desire to do what Reason pronounces to

be right should be paramount, where desires conflict ; but the greater part of the acts of most good men will no doubt be governed by other impulses—habit, custom, authority, emotion—with a merely latent consciousness that the impulses are good and that there is no need to check or inhibit their operation.

(c) It is quite true that in many cases our moral judgements are accompanied by a characteristic emotion, or, rather, by many different kinds of emotion. In some cases this emotion is excited directly by the conduct approved or condemned apart from any reflection upon its rightness or wrongness ; in others the emotion is excited solely by the consciousness that the action is right or wrong. In this last case it is especially clear that the emotion presupposes the judgement and cannot possibly explain it—any more than the pleasure arising from the satisfaction of the desire can explain the desire.

(d) It has often been supposed by ethical Rationalists not merely that ethical judgements are the work of Reason, but that these judgements can be pronounced without any knowledge derived from experience. A purely rational intelligence moving as it were *in vacuo*, having no knowledge of human nature (*i.e.* of anything in man but his Reason)—of human desires, emotions, pleasures, pains, of the structure of human society and the tendency of human acts—could produce, as it were, out of the depths of its own self-consciousness, a detailed code of rules suitable for the guidance of any and every human society.

The most famous of the writers who exhibit this tendency is Kant. Kant was no doubt quite right in calling the moral judgement a “categorical imperative” —that is, a command the obligation of which is not conditional upon any subjective wish or inclination on

the part of the individual whose Reason recognizes the obligation ; but that doctrine does not carry with it (as it sometimes supposed it to do) the implication that the details of duty can be discovered without any reference to experience, or that moral laws must express themselves in hard-and-fast rules which admit of no exceptions—rules which prescribe the same kind of conduct in all possible combinations of circumstances, and the obligation of which is quite independent of consequences not merely to the individual but to society at large.

The question thus raised is in effect the problem of the Moral Criterion, and that is a question which we have not yet considered. So far I have been endeavouring to show merely that the judgement “this is right” is a rational judgement, involving a distinct category of the human thought as much as the judgement “A is the cause of B” or “the whole is greater than its part,” or “If A is B and B is C, then A is C.” We have not yet discussed what acts in particular Reason pronounces to be right, or by what sort of procedure Reason operates in deciding whether an act is right or wrong. That problem will be the subject of the next chapter, and the reader will be in a much better position to judge whether ethical propositions are rational judgements or a mere formulation of human emotions or desires when he discovers what are the sort of propositions for which this rational character is claimed.



## CHAPTER IV

## THE MORAL CRITERION

WE have now reached the question which it is really the supreme object of Ethics to answer—the question “How are we to discover what actions in particular are right or wrong?” All our previous enquiries may be regarded as preliminaries to the treatment of this great and practically all-important problem. It is of no use to know generalities about the meaning of right and wrong unless we can discover some method of discovering what particular actions are right and wrong; and if we can do this, it is probable that our answer to this question will throw more light than anything else upon the meaning of right and wrong in general.

To this fundamental question there have been two traditional answers. According to one view we discover what is right or wrong by an immediate judgement or “intuition” which tells us that this or that act is right without any knowledge of its consequences or of its bearing upon the general well-being either of the individual or of society. This view is commonly known as Intuitionism. Sometimes it is supposed that the intuition relates to each particular act in detail; the judgement is supposed to be, as it were, an *ad hoc* judgement; by others it is supposed that the intuitions relate to whole classes of action, the rightness or wrongness of the particular act being deduced from the general rules, just as a Judge applies a general rule of law to the decisions of particular cases. According to the first theory (to which Professor Sidgwick has applied the name “empirical” or “perceptual” Intuitionism), on each occasion on which I have to decide

whether to speak the truth or not, an immediate intuition arises in my mind telling me that the lie would be wrong or (it may be under certain circumstances) that it would be right. According to the other view (which Sidgwick has called "Philosophical Intuitionism"), I know a priori, and apart from all considerations of social consequences, that all lying is wrong; if I see that this particular act falls within the general category of lying, then I know it would be wrong to do it. It certainly conduces to clearness to divide Intuitional systems in this way, but the distinction is one which is not always made by the intuitional writers themselves: many of them adopt one or the other interpretation of their principle, just as they find most convenient to meet the controversial needs of the moment. It should be added that, in saying that *no* account is taken of the consequences of the action, we are putting the system in its extremest form. Many writers who would on the whole class themselves under this head—who at all events emphatically reject the Utilitarian view of the matter—would admit that to a certain extent and in certain cases consequences have to be considered. The difficulty of these less extreme Intuitionists has always been to explain when consequences are, and when they are not, to be considered. At all events they would all agree that in *some cases* acts are seen to be right or wrong no matter what their consequences may be.

According to the other view we judge of the consequences of acts by attending to their consequences either for the individual or (as is more usually held) for Society at large; that act is right which will produce the greatest amount of good on the whole for the individual or for Society. Such systems are usually spoken of as Utilitarian; and it is part of the traditional Utilitarian creed that this *good*, which is the

ultimate end of all human action, is simply a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain. Utilitarianism is in general usage understood to include Hedonism—the doctrine that pleasure is the only good. But it will be observed at once that there is no necessary connection between the two elements in the traditional Utilitarian doctrine. It is quite possible to hold that acts are, indeed, right or wrong according as they promote either individual or social *well-being*, and yet not to hold that well-being means merely pleasure.

A better classification of ethical systems than that afforded by the traditional opposition between Intuitional and Utilitarian systems would be afforded by dividing them (with Paulsen) into intuitional or (as he calls it) “formalistic” and “teleological” systems. Teleological systems are systems which regard actions as right or wrong in so far as they tend or do not tend to the production of a certain *end* or good, no matter what be the nature of that good. Teleological systems will be further classified in two ways: (1) according as the end which they tend to promote is individual or universal; (2) according to the interpretation which is given to this end. We may have an Egoistic Hedonism which regards the individual’s pleasure as the true end for each individual, or a Universalistic Hedonism which regards the general pleasure as the end by reference to which individual acts are to be pronounced right or wrong. Or, again, it may be held that the true end is not pleasure but moral well-being, or moral well-being + pleasure, or again intellectual activity; or the good may be supposed to consist in all these elements and others besides—and in each of these cases there will be a further subdivision according as the well-being of the individual or of Society is regarded. We thus get the following classifications of ethical systems according to the view they take of the ethical criterion. It is of

course not the only possible classification; and if we looked to the practical tendency or ethical tone of the systems, it is perhaps not the most important. The most fundamental distinction from that point of view is undoubtedly that between hedonistic systems and non-hedonistic; but for the particular purpose of the present discussion this classification will be found useful—

- I. *Intuitionism.* (1) Empirical or Perceptual.  
 (2) Philosophical.
- II. *Teleological systems.* The good may be interpreted as—
- (i.) Pleasure—(a) for the individual (Egoistic Hedonism).  
 (b) for all humanity (Universalistic Hedonism or Utilitarianism).
- (ii.) Moral Well-being—(a) for the individual (Individualistic Perfectionism).  
 (b) for humanity (Universalistic Perfectionism).
- (iii.) A total Well-being<sup>1</sup> including Morality, intellectual and æsthetic good, &c., and recognizing a distinction between higher and lower pleasures.  
 (a) for the individual (Individualistic Eudæmonism).  
 (b) for humanity (Ideal Utilitarianism).

Two or three further remarks may be made on this classification—

(i.) Since almost all non-hedonistic systems regard Morality as part of the individual's good and the promotion of other people's good as at least an important part of Morality, the distinction between the individualistic and the universalistic variety of these systems is not so sharply drawn as might be expected. There are many writers whom it would be difficult to classify definitely under either head; some of these (*e.g.* T. H. Green) go so far as to maintain that no true good can be either wholly individual or wholly social.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Greek would say *εὐδαιμονία*.

<sup>2</sup> On such a view it is clear that nothing but Morality itself can possibly be good at all. Such a position is difficult to reconcile

(ii.) Since moral well-being is made up of individual good acts, it is not very easy to distinguish the method which I have called Individualistic Perfectionism from purely intuitional systems; still, in so far as it is thought that moral action is to be governed by an ideal of character or life *as a whole* rather than by individual and isolated promptings of the moral consciousness in each particular case (*pro re nata*), a system tends to pass from the intuitional into the teleological class—still more so when (as with T. H. Green) the moral well-being of society rather than of the individual is made the criterion.

(iii.) A fourth main division of teleological systems might be established for those who hold that intellectual (including æsthetic) well-being or culture by itself constitutes the end. But this has been seldom systematically maintained. It might be possible, however, to regard Nietzsche (in so far as that writer can be credited with any definite and consistent Ethic) as representing such a system in its individualistic form (though his exaltation of individual power or force would be hard to bring into this scheme), and E. von Hartmann as representing its universalistic variety. The truth is that the number of possible views of the end is potentially unlimited. There is nothing except the obvious and intrinsic unreasonableness of doing so in some cases to prevent any single element of conscious life from being regarded as the only good in human life; but the above classification will be found roughly to correspond with the main divisions of actual opinion.

with the admission, which the same writers invariably make on other occasions, that the important virtue of Justice consists in showing a due estimate of the relative importance of one man's good (whether that can be the man himself, or some one else), and that of each and every other man. The very possibility of injustice implies the possibility that A may enjoy a real good which nevertheless involves an injury to B, which Green's view would make impossible.

Let us now examine the arguments commonly adduced in favour of the two sharply-opposed traditional ways of thinking commonly known as Intuitionism and Utilitarianism. We will consider them firstly in their extremest and most sharply opposed forms.

The Intuitionist asks whether we do not as a matter of fact decide that acts are right or wrong without any conscious reflection upon their influence upon so remote an end as universal well-being. Children and quite uneducated persons, he will point out, immediately and (as it were) instinctively condemn lying without any reflection, or even any capacity for reflecting, upon the commercial and social conveniences secured to society by the habit of truth-speaking. They condemn stealing, though they would be quite unable to write a defence of private property against a Communist or an Anarchist, and so on. And these rules of conduct are frequently recognized and observed by people who seem to trouble themselves remarkably little in other ways about the general welfare. It is, moreover, frequently insisted, though this is not absolutely necessary to Intuitionism (particularly in its perceptual form), that some or all of these moral rules admit of no exception, even when the introduction of exceptions would seem clearly to produce a balance of pleasure and no compensating pain. Kant, for instance, wrote a short treatise against a "supposed right of telling lies from benevolent motives." Moreover, in some cases it is at least plausible to doubt whether, even as a general rule and in the long run, some of the rules of the accepted Morality could really be defended as conducive to a maximum of pleasure, so long at least as all pleasure is regarded as of exactly equal value—the condemnation, for instance, of suicide and the whole system of rules included in the interpretation placed by Christian communities upon the Seventh Commandment. Further, it is contended

that the very strongest conviction that we have is the belief that the moral act in itself, or the character and general direction of the Will which it represents, possesses an *intrinsic* value as distinct from the value of any further effect which may as a matter of fact be produced by the right act. We regard Morality as an end in itself, while we treat the pleasure which actually results from some right acts (some would even say) as not a good at all, or at all events as a good of very inferior value.

To these arguments the Utilitarian would reply in some such way as this—

1. He would freely admit that to a large extent it is true that we do often assent to certain moral rules or pronounce judgements upon individual acts without conscious reflection on the consequences to any one, still less on the ultimate consequences to social well-being; but this, he would contend, is sufficiently accounted for in some cases by early education and the accepted code which Society, by example and precept, reward and punishment, praise and blame, has been impressing upon our minds all through our lives. In other cases the evil consequences of an act are so obvious that practically no reflection is required to stamp the act as wrong. The *good* of Society is made up of lesser *goods*. When we see that an act produces pain, we immediately condemn it unless we have any reason to suspect that the pain will result in an ultimate increase of pleasure. When we see that a child's clothes have caught fire, we do not need to reflect on any consequences for universal well-being before we make up our minds that it is a duty to extinguish the flames, even at the cost of some risk to ourselves. It is clear that the act will conduce to pleasure and to the avoidance of pain. We should feel an equally instinctive desire to kick out of the room a man whom we saw making incisions in the flesh of a human being if we did not

know that he was a Surgeon, and that the making of incisions will tend to save the man's life. Were a competent Physician to suggest that the burning of the child's clothes upon its back would cure it of a fever, every reasonable person would consider it his duty to reconsider his *prima facie* view of the situation. The Utilitarian does not deny that in most cases we act upon some accepted rule of conduct or upon our own immediate impulse without any elaborate calculation of social consequences. Nor does he deny the desirability of the individual conforming in the vast majority of cases to the accepted rule, which he will regard as presumably having its origin in the experience of the race, or obeying the altruistic impulses which certainly promote the immediate well-being of one or more individuals. The question is not so much as to the existence of intuitions or apparent intuitions about conduct, but as to the source of their ultimate authority or validity, and consequently as to their *finality*. In the vast majority of cases it is inevitable and desirable that we should act without any such elaborate calculation. The question is how we are to decide the matter when we begin to doubt whether the accepted rule may not turn out to be no less mistaken and ungrounded than many other rules which were once universally accepted, and are now universally rejected; or to suspect that the indulgence of the first momentary impulse is really injurious to the general well-being. The first impulse of any humane person with a shilling in his pocket, on seeing a hungry beggar in the street, is to give him that shilling. If he put aside all that he knew from experience and the teaching of Political Economy about the effects of indiscriminate almsgiving, he would inevitably treat that impulse as the voice of Conscience. When he takes into account this knowledge, a reasonable man usually changes his judgement, and holds that it is his duty to



keep the shilling in his pocket. Here, as elsewhere, the Utilitarian does not necessarily dispute the existence or authority of Conscience or refuse to obey its dictates. He only refuses to regard Conscience as a blind and unreflecting impulse ; and insists that its verdict must depend upon a rational regard for the consequences of actions so far as such consequences can be foreseen. He finds that so far from Conscience bidding him act without reflection, it is really Conscience that bids him stop and think. And when he does so, he finds it impossible to regard it as *right* to bring about what is not really *good* ; and if every act ought to realize some good, the supreme end of all action must surely be to realize the greatest attainable good.

2. The most obvious lines of attack adopted by the Utilitarian writers is to point to the immense variety of contradictory and inconsistent rules of conduct which have at different times, to different nations or to different individuals, presented themselves as self-evidently true and binding. The traditional method of combating Intuitionism from the time of John Locke to that of Herbert Spencer has been to present the reader with a list of cruel and abominable savage customs, ridiculous superstitions, acts of religious fanaticism and intolerance, which have all alike seemed self-evidently good and right to the peoples or individuals who have practised them. There is hardly a vice or a crime (according to our own moral standard) which has not at some time or other in some circumstances been looked upon as a moral and religious duty. Stealing was accounted virtuous for the young Spartan and among the Indian caste of Thugs. In the ancient world Piracy, *i.e.* robbery and murder, was a respectable profession. To the medieval Christian religious persecution was the highest of duties, and so on.

At first sight this line of argument will seem to many

the most unanswerable. And no doubt if the Intuitionist really does maintain that, as a matter of fact, all human beings have always judged the same things to be right or wrong, if he even maintains with the cautious Bishop Butler that "almost any fair man in almost any circumstance" will know what is the right thing to do, then the existence of these diverse and inconsistent moral ideals is sufficient to refute his contention. We need not look beyond the Old Testament and Homer to see that moral ideals have not always been the same; and even among the most enlightened and morally developed individuals at the present day—in the same nation, in the same class, on the same educational level—there are unquestionably very considerable differences not merely as to the right course of action in some particular collocation of circumstances but even about general questions of ethical principle. But Intuitionism is not necessarily committed to the denial of these things. All modern Intuitionists admit that the moral Consciousness has grown and developed just as much as the intellectual side of our consciousness. Everybody will admit that the difference between a valid syllogism and a syllogism with a fallacy in it, between a good argument and a bad, is something that must be discerned immediately, intuitively, or not at all. But it does not follow that all men are equally good arguers or judges of argument. As a matter of fact, illogical thinkers are more numerous than logical ones. It is quite possible to maintain that Morality consists in a body of isolated rules or isolated and disconnected judgements discernible by intuition without any reference to consequences, although it is admitted that the knowledge of such truths has been gradually developed, and that individuals even now vary indefinitely in their power of discerning them. Self-evident truths are not truths which are evident

to everybody. Few, if any, cultivated Moralists would explicitly contend that what they regard as self-evident moral axioms or self-evidently true judgements in particular cases have been or are actually assented to by all human beings, although even at the present day Anti-utilitarian Moralists do show a disposition to assume a greater identity of moral ideals than actually exists. One reason for this is that the cases usually taken as examples of self-evident moral truths are negative rules. A general agreement that murder, theft, and cruelty are wrong may exist amidst very great diversities of view as to the positive ideal of human life.

3. Though a certain number of moral rules will be generally assented to so long as they are expressed in vague and general terms, these rules turn out on reflection to be quite insufficient for the guidance of conduct. We readily assent to the propositions "I ought to be benevolent, just, honest," &c., but when we come to details, we find that the general agreement which is usually insisted upon by the Intuitionist begins to disappear: nor does the right course of action always seem obvious even to the individual. When this is the case, it will commonly be found that men really do appeal to social consequences. When a man begins to dispute or to have doubts in his own mind as to the morality of war, of gambling, of sport, of vivisection, or when a Christian and a Mahometan dispute as to the morality of Polygamy, it is usually upon the balance of advantages and disadvantages that the argument turns.

4. It can hardly be disputed that the great majority of accepted moral rules can be justified on the ground of their tendency to promote a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain; and, though primitive man was not as much of a Utilitarian as the older Utilitarian writers supposed, the social ill effects of murder (at least within the tribe), stealing, assault, and the like are too

obvious not to have formed both to the social and to the individual consciousness part at least of the ground why these things were regarded as wrong. Much of primitive morality originated in instincts which on the whole were conducive to tribal well-being (whether or not this was perceived), or in superstitious beliefs about Totems and Taboos which may or may not have had good social effects ; but certain rules were too obviously conducive to social welfare for their tendency not to be observed. Still more obvious is this utilitarian justification when we consider the causes why some primitive moral rules have survived to the present time, while a thousand other savage ideas have been abandoned as baseless superstitions. In other cases the social utility of the traditional rule reveals itself on reflection, although it may not have the original ground for its adoption, *e.g.* rules against the marriage of near kin. The more modern Utilitarian Moralists would often insist upon the effects of natural selection in promoting the survival of the tribe whose Morality was most Utilitarian. From these facts the Utilitarian would argue that our actual, accepted Morality really owes its origin to Utilitarian considerations, and that these same considerations are the real ground for acting upon instincts and traditional rules, though they will occasionally require us to act in opposition to them where they have been discovered not to be socially useful, or where they have lost the social utility which they once possessed.

5. Still more clearly evident is the appeal to consequences in our actual judgements, when the moral rules put forward as self-evident actually collide with one another—the precept of humanity, for instance, with that of veracity. It seems self-evident that I ought to speak the truth, and equally self-evident that I ought to save life. What is to be done when I can only speak the truth at the cost of taking life (*e.g.* blurting out bad

news to a sick man), and can only save life at the cost of a lie? Whatever expedient may be adopted for solving such problems, the existence of these collisions is a final refutation of the claim of such rules to be absolutely true and finally valid deliverances of the Moral Reason. Reason does not contradict itself.

6. The supposed exceptionless rules of conduct put forth by at least one class of Intuitionists generally turn out on reflection to admit of a good many exceptions which are practically recognized by the most conscientious persons. Few people will agree with Kant as to the duty of pointing out to the would-be murderer the whereabouts of his intended victim if the truth could only be concealed by means of a lie. It may be doubted whether English Criminal Law would not even pronounce a man who did so to be an accessory before the fact, and therefore equally guilty with the murderer. The most logical Intuitionists are men of the Tolstoi stamp who really do hold, and (as far as they can) act upon the principle that we must never resist force by force, never arrest a thief, must literally give to him that asketh up to one's last penny and so on. But for this view it is impossible to claim the general assent to which Intuitionists are fond of appealing. Most plain men and most intuitionist philosophers do recognize exceptions; and yet, as to what the exceptions are, there is no general consensus, while in innumerable cases the individual himself will often find no self-evident guidance in his own heart. And in practice, whenever the legitimacy of such exceptions is disputed, they are usually defended by pointing to the pernicious social consequences which would in particular cases result from the application of the usual rule.

7. But there remains a more formidable difficulty than any that has been mentioned. How are we going to distinguish between an act and its consequences?

*Some* consequences are included in the meaning of the act. Divest an act of all the consequences, and nothing really remains behind. What would be the sense of asking whether drunkenness would still be wrong if it did not make a man thick in his speech, unsteady in his gait, erratic in his conduct, incoherent in his thoughts, and so on. Drunkenness deprived of *all* these consequences would not be drunkenness at all. And if we are to consider some of these consequences, why not all the consequences so far as they can be foreseen? If the drinking of alcohol in large quantities had none of these effects, it would be as innocent as water-drinking. In a rough-and-ready way we can of course distinguish between the consequences which do and those which do not fall within our conception of the act. But that arises merely from arbitrary definitions and the conventions of language. The more immediate consequences are commonly included in the conception of an act, while remote consequences are excluded.

How purely conventional is the distinction between a rule subject to exceptions and a rule which has no exceptions may be illustrated by the difference between the case of lying and the case of murder. Moralists like Kant have supposed themselves bound to condemn all lying because there is no general consensus that legitimate lies—the untruths told by detectives to deceive criminals, or in war to deceive the enemy, or by the sick man's relative to save his life—are not lies. The condemnation of murder appears to have no exceptions because there is an established convention that lawful killing is no murder, however much variety of opinion there may be as to the circumstances which remove killing from the category of murder.

If to drink alcohol to the point of stupefaction once in a lifetime were found to be an effectual prophylactic against (say) cancer, small-pox, and typhoid-fever, we

should still perhaps say that the act was an act of drunkenness, but that in that case drunkenness would be right. There is hardly any act now called wrong about which we might not theoretically be compelled to reconsider our verdict if a sufficiently revolutionary discovery were made as to its ultimate consequences. When we say, as we often quite reasonably do say, that we feel such an act would always be wrong no matter what its consequences, we really presuppose some knowledge of the actual nature of things ; we often do know sufficiently for practical purposes that no good consequences could actually result which would be sufficient to neutralize the bad ones which we clearly discern. Nobody can rid himself of much knowledge, derived from experience, as to the effects of different courses of action sufficiently to pronounce that completely a priori, isolated judgement upon the rightness or wrongness of an act which the thorough-going Intuitionist declares that he ought to pronounce and to regard as final and irreversible. When he condemns human sacrifice, he really assumes such a knowledge of the nature of things as makes it unreasonable to suppose that the sin of an individual or a nation could be expiated or the consequences of divine anger deflected by such a course. No sane man ever does really pronounce upon the morality of an act in *entire* abstraction from its consequences, and when once it is admitted some consequences must be considered, there is no logical stopping until we have considered all the consequences which we have any reason to believe will result from the act ; though the necessities of practical action constantly require us to decide and act when we have satisfied ourselves that the nearer consequences are good, and have no reason to suspect that the remoter ones will be bad.

The more the attempt to distinguish between the act

and its consequences is examined, the more impracticable it will, I believe, be found, and the more hopeless the endeavour to pronounce upon the morality of the act without reference to such foreseen or foreseeable consequences. So far Intuitionism must be regarded as an impossible and obsolete mode of ethical thought; and it is seldom consistently maintained at the present day even by those who show more or less hesitation in actually embracing the utilitarian position that acts are right or wrong according as they do or do not tend to promote the greatest quantity of good. To my own mind it is plain that so far the Utilitarian is absolutely and incontrovertibly right. But this doctrine is, as has been explained, only one side of the Utilitarian system as expounded by its acknowledged representatives, by men like Hume, Bentham, and Mill. The other side of that system consists in the doctrine that the good means simply the pleasant. We have already examined the attempt to *prove* this doctrine by the theory known as psychological Hedonism; but we have also seen that, though this hedonistic Psychology is false, its refutation does not necessarily involve the abandonment of Hedonism. Though we *can* desire and pursue other things besides pleasure, it may still be held that, if we do so, we are fools for our pains. It may still be held that pleasure is the only true or reasonable or right object of desire or end of action—that pleasure is the only good. Now this doctrine may mean one of two things; it may mean simply that good and pleasure mean the same thing, or (what is much the same position) that there is no real meaning or validity in the judgement that one end ought to be pursued rather than another. This view I have attempted to combat in the only way in which any doctrine about ends can be combated—by showing that it does not correspond with the facts of consciousness. We do use the words “good” and



“right,” and attach a definite meaning to them ; nor can the notions which they imply be resolved into any simpler or more ultimate notions. In the present chapter I have further attempted to show that to pronounce an act *right* means at bottom to say that it is a means to something which we recognize as *good* or (more strictly) that it is a means to the greatest attainable good. But still the question remains, “What is this good, or (if the good consists in more elements than one) what ends of action or objects of desire or kinds of consciousness are ultimately good, and in what proportion do they contribute to the ideal or supremely good life ?” Now in answer to that question it is still possible for an objector to allege that nothing presents itself to him as ultimately good except pleasure and pleasure measured quantitatively. And such is the position actually adopted in the most defensible form which Hedonism has assumed in recent times—the rationalistic Hedonism of which the late Professor Henry Sidgwick is the typical representative. It will be well to examine this system a little further.

So long as we are asking the questions, “What is right, what is duty, why should I do my duty ?” Professor Sidgwick gives substantially the answer that would be given by the Intuitionist. He frequently adopts, and identifies himself with, the language of stern Apostles of Duty like Butler or Kant. We have, he recognizes, an ultimate, unanalysable category of Duty or Right which comes from our Reason ; and, on reflection, it further appears that it is right or reasonable for us to promote the good for all human beings. The fact that it is my duty is a sufficient reason for doing it ; the good man will do his duty for duty’s sake or (what is the same thing, in other words) because he sees that it is reasonable for him to do so. More in detail there are three precepts which Sidgwick recognizes as strictly self-evident axioms—

1. That I ought to promote my own greater good rather than my own lesser good (Axiom of Prudence).

2. That I ought to promote the greatest good on the whole (Axiom of Rational Benevolence).

3. That, in the distribution of good, I ought, so far as my action can secure it, to regard one man's good as being equally valuable with the like good of another according to the Benthamite maxim, "Everyone to count for one, nobody for more than one." (Axiom of Equity.)

But when he goes on to ask, "What is this good which I ought to promote and to distribute equally?" Sidgwick's answer is the old Utilitarian answer—"The greatest quantum of pleasure." Are we prepared to accept this view as to the ultimate end of life. If not, what can we say against it?

1. Now in the first place it should be observed that in the system of Sidgwick no attempt is made to show that the doctrine can be *proved* by the hedonistic Psychology or any other facts of experience. Frankly and avowedly the system rests upon an intuition—as much so as any Anti-utilitarian system that was ever invented. Sidgwick fully recognizes that the proposition "Pleasure is good" is as much an a priori or immediate judgement as the proposition "Virtue is good" or "Virtue and pleasure are both good." As the proposition can only be supported by an appeal to an ultimate judgement of our Reason or moral Consciousness, so in the last resort it can only be refuted by showing that it does not really correspond to the actual verdict of our Moral Consciousness. The final reason for denying that pleasure as the only good is that most of us do not really think so. But of course it is not likely that anyone to whom Hedonism commends itself as plausible will be convinced by merely setting up one alleged "intuition" to contradict another alleged intuition. "Questions of ultimate ends," as is admitted by the

Utilitarian J. S. Mill, "are not capable of proof in the ordinary acceptation of the term."<sup>1</sup> But what we can do is (a) to show some of the logical difficulties which are involved in one's opponent's position, and (b) to contend that the position is not supported by that "general consensus of mankind" to which he himself appeals in defence of it. This I shall proceed to do.

2. The great difficulty of all Hedonism which professes to support, and not to undermine, the ordinary notions about Duty or moral obligation is to find a reason why I should promote other people's pleasure rather than my own; except of course in so far as my own tastes or the efficiency of the police or the like may chance to bring about a coincidence between my own interest and that of the general public. Sidgwick<sup>2</sup> contends that the reason for my doing so is that it seems intrinsically unreasonable (or wrong) that a smaller amount of good should be promoted rather than a larger—no matter whether that good be mine or another person's. Men possess a Reason which tells them that not to do so would be unreasonable, and some of them are endowed with a "desire to do what is right and reasonable as such," which sometimes induces them actually to do the reasonable thing even

<sup>1</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> I pass over another side of Professor Sidgwick's view—his admission of the partial rationality of Egoism, involving a "Dualism of the Practical Reason," which, he thinks, can only be removed by assuming the truth of theological postulates, *i.e.* of God and Immortality. It can, I believe, be shown that all Egoism (whether the good be conceived of as Pleasure or anything else) is absolutely and irredeemably irrational, since it involves a contradiction. Good means "ought to be pursued," and Egoism makes it reasonable for me to assert that "my good is the only thing that ought to be pursued," while it pronounces that my neighbour is right in denying that proposition and in asserting that his pleasure is the only thing to be pursued. Therefore contradictory propositions are both true. But I must not further develop this point, which no one has pushed home so thoroughly as Mr. Moore in his brilliant *Principia Ethica*, pp. 99-103.

at the cost of their own good (*i.e.* pleasure) rather than the unreasonable. The act is reasonable and right; but Sidgwick will not say that such conduct is in itself good. The consequences of the act are good, *i.e.* the other people's pleasure which is promoted; but there is nothing good or intrinsically valuable in the act itself, in the state of mind from which it results, in the desires or motives which inspire it. Moral conduct, in such cases, implies absolute self-sacrifice. Morality is, as Thrasymachus in the Republic contended, wholly and entirely "another's good"—no good at all to the agent. Now I do not think this position involves any actual logical contradiction; but it does involve what may be called a psychological contradiction. The state of mind which it postulates in a good man acting (with full realisation of this meaning) upon Sidgwickian principles is an impossible state of mind, or at all events one so rare that it might fairly be described as pathological. If a man really cares about being reasonable, is it conceivable that he should at the bottom of his heart believe it a matter of no importance at all whether he is reasonable or not—that he should think it an advantage indeed to somebody else, but a matter of no importance and (if it involves him in painful consequences) a dead loss to himself? If he really did regard Morality or character or goodness as a completely valueless asset, would he any longer care whether his conduct was reasonable or not? As a matter of fact, the conviction that there is such a thing as duty, that one kind of conduct is intrinsically reasonable or right and another kind of conduct is intrinsically unreasonable or wrong, has almost invariably gone along with the conviction that right conduct, or the character or disposition which results in right conduct, is in and for itself a good and the greatest of goods. The strongest conviction of those who have been most influenced by the desire

that their conduct should be rational or right has been that Virtue is "its own exceeding great reward"—not necessarily its only reward, but that it is really worth having in and for itself.

It is impossible to give any satisfactory reason for preferring the general pleasure to one's own unless we regard Morality as an end-in-itself, and an end of more value than pleasure. And if it is an end-in-itself for me, it must be regarded as an end-in-itself for others also. We shall thus have to include moral Well-being or "the good will" in our conception of the end or good which it is the duty of each to promote for all.

Thus, if the inner logic of Sidgwick's rationalistic Utilitarianism be followed out, it will be found to have transformed itself into a system which may perhaps still be called Utilitarianism, but which has ceased to be Hedonism. The end or good or Well-being the tendency to promote which will mark out acts as right or wrong, will no longer be simple pleasure, but goodness + pleasure, even supposing we still insist that goodness means nothing but the disposition to promote pleasure—or rather pleasure and the willingness to promote pleasure—for others. In this way, no doubt, most of the practical objections to Utilitarianism will be removed. The more glaring discrepancies between logical Utilitarianism and the moral ideal recognized by most good men will disappear. The most obvious of all these discrepancies is perhaps to be found in the fact that the ordinary moral consciousness does not treat all pleasure as exactly on a level. I have already pointed out that, so long as we regard pleasure as our only end, it is impossible to recognize differences in the quality of pleasures, which are not ultimately resolvable into differences of quantity. It is otherwise when we regard Morality as an end-in-itself, even if we still regarded Morality as consisting in nothing but Bene-

volence, or rather Benevolence guided by Justice. For if Goodness in the sense of Altruism be regarded as good in itself, we shall be able to recognize the superior value of those pleasures which have in them an altruistic element. We shall be able to regard the pleasures which actually consist in or include the exercise of altruistic emotions—the pleasures of benevolence, of family affection, of friendship, the pleasures which consist in any form of useful activity—as superior to merely selfish or sensual pleasures, as superior in themselves and not merely on account of their effects. Moreover, we shall be able to a considerable extent to justify the superiority which we instinctively accord to those pleasures which arise from the exercise of our higher faculties—intellectual, æsthetic, emotional—as compared with those which spring from the mere satisfaction of bodily appetites. For in a rough and general way it will hardly be doubted that the social effects of such indulgence are better than those which result from indulgence in sensual pleasures. The artist, the man of letters, the discoverer do benefit the world, however little as individuals they may be directly influenced by philanthropic motives. Even if the man who indulges in such pleasures confines himself to the enjoyment of what others produce, the cultivation of these higher tastes will in general make him a more useful and valuable member of society than the man who has no pleasures but those of sport or athletics, or eating and drinking. At the very least he will be much less likely to indulge in pleasures which are socially pernicious. Even the most selfish dilettante does help to create a demand for pictures, books, good music, and the like, which have more tendency to create pleasure for others than the enjoyments of the mere sensualist. Moreover, from this point of view we can even pronounce some pleasures to be bad—bad in themselves and not merely

for their external effects—that is to say, any pleasures which actually involve the giving pain to others, or which are inconsistent with that cultivation in himself of moral character which we have agreed to recognize as a good of superior value to pleasure. And we may incidentally remark that even from the point of view which we have now reached, we can see a reason for condemning suicide—at least in the vast majority of cases—in a way which was impossible so long as we regarded pleasure as the only end of action. If goodness be an end in itself, life will not lose all its value the moment it has ceased to yield to the individual a net balance of pleasure over pain.

3. The position that the good or end of life consists simply in these two elements—goodness + pleasure—is a perfectly possible one. It was quite explicitly held, for instance, if not always consistently, by Kant. It is not possible to urge against it any fundamental objection from the point of view of logic or internal consistency such as we have been able to urge against the attempt to combine the view that pleasure is the only good with a recognition of the duty of preferring the general pleasure to one's own. The question remains whether, after all, this is the real verdict of our moral consciousness. To begin with, let us look once more at the question of higher and lower pleasures. High-minded Hedonists are fond of arguing that the preference for higher pleasures can be justified by their superior pleasantness : but this does not correspond to what we really feel about them. Very often, I think, we should recognize that the lower pleasure, considered merely as a pleasure, would be the more intense ; and yet we prefer, and feel that it is reasonable to prefer, the higher. The higher pleasures are frequently mixed with a good deal of pain—those pleasures of sympathy, for instance, upon the value of which amiable Hedonists are so fond of en-

larging, or the pleasures of serious study: yet we feel that they are worth the pain; we prefer them, or at least we think we ought to prefer them, to any possible enlargement or prolongation of those merely sensual pleasures in which there is no element of pain at all. We feel that no possible quantitative accumulation of gastronomic delights would ever be regarded as a satisfactory equivalent for the total loss of intellectual satisfaction. When we are obliged to choose between a large amount of a lower and a small amount of a higher pleasure, we may no doubt think that a very large amount of the lower is worth more than a very small amount of the higher. Though we regard the pleasure of reading Shakespeare as a more valuable thing than the freedom from toothache, there is a limit to the amount of toothache which we should think it reasonable to submit to as the price of reading the best hundred lines that Shakespeare ever wrote. But, though we may sometimes think it reasonable to give up the higher for a sufficient amount of the lower pleasure—still more often to save a sufficient amount of pain—we could never say that any quantity of the lower good would render it a matter of indifference to us to lose the higher. Yet this is what we should be bound to say if we are consistently to carry out Bentham's famous principle that, "quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry." On this view it would always be possible to state the exact number of bottles of champagne which would be a completely satisfactory equivalent for the pleasure of reading *Hamlet*, and the number of bottles for the sake of which we should give up the pleasure of reading the finest poem in the world. If we do not think so, it is clear that we are not indifferent to the source from which our pleasures are derived, or the kind of consciousness which we find pleasant. We recognize that the higher experience possesses more value



than the lower, though it does not necessarily contain more pleasure.

It may be that pleasure attends, or forms an element in, all the states of consciousness which we can regard as ultimately good : but, as soon as a man says : " I prefer the higher pleasure though I don't think it will be more pleasant than the lower," it is clear that he does not think pleasure to be the only good. When he prefers intellectual pleasure to sensual, he is really preferring intellectual activity+pleasure to pleasure only. We must, indeed, beware of supposing that these two elements in our total consciousness—the pleasure and the intellectual state that is pleasant—can really be separated, or that we do usually pronounce a judgement upon the value of the one apart from that of the other. Still, it is possible to attend to the pleasantness of the state apart from anything else about it ; and that is what the Hedonist says that we ought always to do. But that is just what ordinary men do not do, and do not think it reasonable to do. They might, indeed, attach much less importance to the intellectual activity if it were divorced from all pleasure, but they do not think that in estimating the value of such pleasure they must make abstraction of its connection with intellectual activity, or that a certain amount of the pleasure of cricket would be of exactly equal value. They pass their judgements of value upon the experience or mental state as a whole. They do not regard the whole value of the state as consisting merely in the amount of the pleasure : and that is the same thing as to say that they do regard intellectual activity as a good in itself.

To say that the good or true well-being of human life consists merely in these two sharply-distinguished elements, Morality+Pleasure, is then a quite inadequate account of it. If we are asked what other goods we recognize in human life, the most important element is

no doubt that enjoyment of intellectual and æsthetic good which we have just been considering. But there is no reason for limiting our conception of the good to these three elements—the good-will, intellectual good, pleasure. Most people will on reflection recognize that they assign a higher value to various kinds of affection or social emotion quite apart from the fact that these emotions do in general stimulate men to the causing of pleasure in others ; and from this point of view we can condemn many customs or social institutions which might possibly result in an increase of pleasure, *e.g.* the permission of infanticide, the elimination of the old and the sick, the permission of unlimited freedom of divorce. We should say that the extinction of parental and family affection involved in such a reconstruction of Society as Plato recommends in his Republic would lead to the decay or loss of very valuable elements in character or conscious experience. We may even (with men like Plato and Aristotle) maintain that not all pleasure is good, and we need not condemn the pleasure merely because of its tendency to produce a loss of pleasure in other directions : we can condemn not merely the pleasures of cruelty but those of lust, *i.e.* those resulting from the gratification of the sexual impulse except in a way that is duly subordinated to the higher and more spiritual ends promoted by monogamous and relatively permanent marriage.<sup>1</sup> We are able to condemn drunkenness and other kinds of intemperance without proving that the pleasure of an occasional drinking-bout is necessarily outweighed by the resulting headache or loss of health.

It must be mentioned that in treating the total good of human life as made up of different elements, we are

<sup>1</sup> By this I mean marriage intended by the parties to be permanent and not to be dissolved except for grave reasons. I do not mean that divorce and re-marriage may not sometimes be the less of two evils.

looking upon the matter in a very abstract way. We cannot regard the ideal life of man as made up simply of the juxtaposition of so many goods, as though each were to be enjoyed separately and independently. The ideal life is not one in which five-eighths of a man's waking hours are devoted to Morality, one-fourth to pleasure, and the remaining one-eighth to pleasure. The claims of Morality extend over the whole life ; but in the course of doing his duty a man is or may be exercising his highest intellectual faculties, and at the same time getting the pleasure which results from such exercise. It is only in the comparatively rare case of collision between the higher good and the lower that it becomes necessary to choose between them. In the abstract we may say that it is always a man's duty to prefer for himself and for others the higher good to a much larger amount of the lower ; but the good of human life does not consist merely in the higher good without the lower. A life of virtue combined with complete stupidity or continuous toothache would not be the ideal life for man, though it might be much better than a life of perfectly selfish culture or of successful pleasure-seeking. Our moral judgements relate quite as much to the determination of the proper proportion between the different elements in human life as to the abstract preference of one good to another. To arrive at a perfectly truthful moral judgement as to the rightness or wrongness of particular acts, we should form a conception of human life as a whole, and then ask what mode of action in any given circumstance will promote that true good.

The method of Ethics which attempts to determine the Morality of acts by their tendency to promote such an ideal good may be called Ideal Utilitarianism. Such a method will agree with Utilitarianism in judging of the morality of actions by their tendency to promote a maximum of good on the whole ; it will differ from ordinary

hedonistic Utilitarianism in recognizing that this good is an ideal good made up of many elements which possess different values, but each of which ought to exist and to bear a certain proportion to the others in the best human life. It has been assumed throughout that in this hierarchy of goods Morality or goodness is always to be regarded as supreme: the other goods will be promoted exactly in so far as the Moral Reason itself dictates. Although Morality is not the only element of value in human good, a man can never be required by the principle here defended to make any sacrifice of this highest good for the sake of any of the lower goods; for if, when he is for the moment choosing some lower good, he is only assigning to it its true value and no more, he will only be doing his duty, and so his conduct could not possibly involve any sacrifice of moral goodness.

But at this point a difficulty may be apt to suggest itself. Is a man, it may be said, always morally bound to do what will promote the maximum of good on the whole at the cost of any amount of his own lower good? Is the question, "What shall I do" always a question of absolute right or absolute wrong? Or is the alternative sometimes simply the choice between a higher and a lower? Granted that a man cannot morally do less than his duty, may he not sometimes do more? Granted that every man is bound to be benevolent, is every one bound to make every conceivable sacrifice which would result in a net good for society greater than the good which he would lose? Are there not some acts which it is good to do but not wrong for a man to leave undone? This is theoretically one of the most difficult questions of Ethics, and practically one of the most important. It is the question which by Theologians is expressed in the form, "Can there be such a thing as works of supererogation?" It is impossible here to discuss it as it deserves, and I can only give briefly what seems to me the

true solution of it. A man can never be justified in doing less than his duty, but one man's duty may be higher than another's. Here it becomes necessary to bear in mind what we may call the great utilitarian principle of the "long-run"—that principle of the necessity for general rules on which writers like Hume have insisted so much. In determining what it is right to do, we have to consider not merely the effect of the particular act, but the ultimate effects of making the principle on which we act into a general rule of conduct. Now when we look upon the matter in this light, we shall easily recognize that the different capacities of different men and the complex needs of human society make it desirable that great sacrifices for the good of humanity should at times be made by some, but not imposed upon all. While, therefore, some rules of conduct are binding upon all (since this universal observance is required in the interests of Society), there are other cases when it is reasonable to sanction both a higher and lower kind of life, when we can say that one course of conduct is the highest, though it is not wrong to adopt the lower. There are, in other words, differences of moral *vocation*; but this liberty of choice must be qualified by the duty of choosing one's vocation rightly. Vocation is determined partly by a man's external circumstances and the needs of human society, partly by his own moral and intellectual capacities. A man must always do *his* duty and can never without sin do less; but the duty of some men is higher and more exacting than that of others. Such an answer to the problem is at all events in accordance with common sense moral ideas. We recognize it as a duty for all men to speak the truth and to do some form of useful work. We recognize it as a good thing for some men to become self-sacrificing apostles, missionaries of a religious faith or of social reform or of many another great cause; but we do not recognize this as a duty for all men. Yet we

should insist that if a man came to the conclusion that he, being what he actually is, could be more useful to Society by being a missionary, and felt in himself the capacity of such a life of self-sacrifice, it would be a failure in duty for him to refuse what would thus present itself to him as a call<sup>1</sup> to be a Missionary. Sometimes the very existence of a strong natural desire that a particular kind of work should be done may make it a duty for a man to devote himself to it. For a man who, though he might desire the spread of true religious ideas among the less enlightened race of mankind, was more naturally interested in the advance of knowledge, it might be a duty to devote himself to the advance of knowledge; and yet it may be admitted that the more self-sacrificing mode of life is intrinsically and abstractedly the higher and nobler, and further we may add that it is often a man's duty to aim at acquiring a capacity for higher services and more strenuous sacrifice than that of which he at present feels himself capable. A man can never do more than his duty, but it is sometimes one man's duty to do and to suffer more than another's duty demands of him.

It will now be seen that our criterion of Utilitarianism in its rationalistic form has brought us round to the admission of much that was contended for by the typical Intuitionist. We have accepted his fundamental principle that a man's duty is something which has to be intuitively perceived. We have insisted upon the doctrine upon which Intuitionists have usually laid the greatest stress—the doctrine that Morality or good character is an end-in-itself, the most important of all ends, the greatest of all goods. But there is a fundamental

<sup>1</sup> The word of course suggests the religious conception that God is calling him to the particular task. It will be unnecessary to discuss here how far some men may have any more immediate consciousness of such a call than is implied in the consciousness that it is his duty so to act.

difference between our intuitions and the intuitions of the Intuitionist. The typical Intuitionist professes to determine by quasi-instinctive or a priori judgement the rightness or wrongness of an act without knowing any, or at least without knowing all, of its consequences. Such a method of ethical judgement we have rejected as irrational, since it practically amounts to pronouncing an act right or wrong without knowing what in fact the act really is : the act is the whole sum of effects resulting from a given volition, so far as they are or could be foreseen by the agent. *Our* intuitions relate not to isolated acts or isolated rules of action, but to ends—to the intrinsic value of different kinds of consciousness. We must, indeed, know from experience what an end is before we can pronounce it good or bad ; we cannot pronounce knowledge better than pleasure or pleasure better than pain without knowing what in fact knowledge and pleasure and pain in general, or such and such particular pleasures, actually are ; and this we can only know from experience ; and we are dependent upon experience for our knowledge as to the consequences likely to result from such and such conduct. But when we come to ask what is the intrinsic and the relative value of such and such a state of consciousness, experience can tell us nothing. Yet we do, all of us, pronounce these judgements. *The moral judgement has turned out to be in the last resort a judgement of value.* The intuitions of the Intuitionist related to isolated acts ; ours relate to goods or ends. His are expressed in the form, “ This is right ” ; ours assume the form, “ This is good.” Such a position, be it observed, involves no surrender of the ultimate, unanalysable character of the idea of “ rightness,” “ oughtness ” or “ duty.” For the good or valuable means “ what ought to be so far as it can be ” ; in the judgement that an end is good it is implied that, if by any voluntary act of mine it can be promoted, I ought to do

that act. The good and the right are correlative terms. We cannot fully think out the meaning of the one without understanding the meaning of the other, just as the convex implies a concave, and the notion of father involves that of son.

We have assumed so far that in estimating the rightness of actions we are concerned only with human good. But if pleasure be allowed to be a good and pain to be an evil, why are the pains and pleasures of the animals to be left out of the calculation? It must, I think, be admitted that in strictness they ought to be included. We should have no reason for condemning cruelty to animals unless we do regard the animal's pleasure as a good and its pain as an evil. And that verdict, I believe, the developed moral consciousness actually accepts. But the good of which the animals are capable is a good of a comparatively lower order. We can hardly attribute to them any good but pleasure, and the more animal kind of affection would seem to be their highest pleasure; while it is but rarely that we can really promote the good of the animals in any positive way, as distinct from not causing them pain, without a disproportionate diminution of the higher human good. And therefore it is but seldom that we need take into account the effect of our conduct upon animal well-being. The duty of humanity towards animals should be insisted upon in its proper place; but it seems unnecessary to cumber our statement about the criterion of human conduct by adding to every proposition about the duty of promoting true human well-being the rider "and the well-being of the lower animals in so far as they are capable of it and in proportion to its value."

The position at which we have arrived may be briefly summed up as follows:

1. Intuitionism is right in maintaining the ultimate unanalysable character of the ideas implied in our moral



judgements—the ideas right and wrong, good and evil, and consequently the intuitive or immediate character of our *ultimate* moral judgements. It is right in the supreme value which it has usually assigned to moral goodness, and its refusal to measure the value of other elements in consciousness by the mere quantity of pleasure involved in them. It is wrong in its attempt to determine the rightness or wrongness of isolated acts or isolated rules of conduct without reference to their effects upon human life as a whole.

2. Utilitarianism is right in insisting that the true criterion of Morality is the tendency of an act to produce the maximum of human Well-being. It is wrong in identifying *the* good with pleasure, though right in regarding pleasure as *a* good and an element in *the* good.

3. These two complementary aspects of ethical truth may be brought together by recognizing that (a) the very principles upon which a rational Utilitarianism is founded are themselves intuitive truths, *i.e.* the rules of Rational Benevolence and Equity; and (b) that all other intuitions are really judgements of value, *i.e.* judgements as to the ultimate value of different states of consciousness. In ultimate analysis *all* moral judgements may be reduced to such judgements of value; for when once it is settled what mode of consciousness is valuable, it follows (upon the assumption that the good has quantity) that a larger amount of it must always be preferable to a smaller, and that one man's good must be of equal intrinsic value with *the like good*<sup>1</sup> of every other man.

<sup>1</sup> This qualification was not recognized by Bentham, and indeed could not be recognized by one who thought that pleasure measured quantitatively was the only good. If this qualification be ignored, we should have no reason for preferring a man's good to an animal's, except upon the very doubtful assumption that a man's pleasures are usually pleasanter to him than a pig's pleasures are to the pig. Sidgwick has also failed to make this distinction.

## CHAPTER V

## MORALITY AND RELIGION

WE have so far treated the Science of Ethics as if it were an independent Science which could be treated in complete abstraction from all other questions as to the ultimate nature of the Universe. We have simply examined the nature and contents of our moral Consciousness without making any preliminary assumption as to the nature of the Universe at large or as to man's place in that Universe, and without, on the other hand, asking what light is thrown by the facts of the Moral Consciousness upon these wider problems. But, for reasons which were indicated in our introductory chapter, it is impossible to treat ethical questions fully and satisfactorily without finding ourselves involved in these further questions. A very brief attempt must now be made to deal with the relation of Ethics to our general theory of the Universe—that is to say, practically, to Metaphysics, to Theology, and to Religion.

In the present chaos of opinion upon such ultimate questions it is not surprising that many persons of much practical earnestness should make the attempt to put Ethics upon a basis which shall be quite independent of all metaphysical or theological opinions. The "independence of Ethics" is a favourite watchword with those who in practical life wish to substitute "ethical culture" for Religion, ethical teaching for religious education, ethical societies for Churches. Now this independence may be asserted in two senses which should be carefully distinguished. So long as the phrase merely implies that our ethical judgements are not in any sense deductions or inferences from some previously accepted view of the Universe, and that the words "right" and

“wrong” have a distinct meaning which does not involve any immediate reference to the idea of God or to any other metaphysical creed, we are undoubtedly right in speaking of the “independence of ethics.” The notion that right and wrong mean simply what is in accordance with the will of God (considered merely as a powerful Being who has threatened to reward certain actions and to punish others) is one which has seldom been maintained by Christian Theologians except during a few very short periods of theological degeneracy. Such a view reduces to absolute meaninglessness the fundamental Christian idea that God is intrinsically good and loving. Nor is there in the bare consciousness of duty any necessary reference to any form of expected reward or punishment in this life or any other. The ideas of right and wrong, or good and evil, are found in the adherents of the most diverse religions, in people who have never embraced a religious creed or have deliberately abandoned one, in people of all metaphysical views, and in people who have not consciously and explicitly accepted any particular theory, positive or negative, as to the ultimate nature of things. Such persons have the notion of right and wrong in general, more or less fully developed, in their minds; they act upon such ideas, or they condemn themselves when they do not: and, though it cannot be said that men’s notions of what particular acts are right or wrong are unaffected by their religious beliefs or disbeliefs, their actual moral code tends to be more and more nearly identical as they approach the higher levels of moral and spiritual experience. All this has been assumed, and even strongly asserted, throughout this work.

But that is a very different thing from asserting that a constructive ethical creed—an ethical creed which asserts the validity of moral obligation—can be combined with any and every possible metaphysical theory.

There are many metaphysical views which are quite inconsistent with the idea of moral obligation, although those who hold them may not always be aware of the fact. Some men are logically precluded from asserting the idea of moral obligation by their theory of knowledge. Some philosophers, for instance, have supposed that all knowledge is derived from sensible experience; the idea of moral obligation clearly cannot be so derived, for no amount of experience as to what *is* can prove an *ought*. Hence upon this hypothesis the idea of "ought" must be pronounced to be a mere delusion; and when sensation is made into the sole ground of knowledge it is difficult to discover any standard for the value of mere sensation except its pleasurable-ness. Sensationalism has always therefore shown a tendency to ally itself with Hedonism. Still less is a constructive theory of Ethics open to those who follow out a sensationalistic theory of knowledge to its logical consequences, and avowedly admit that we have no reasonable ground for asserting our belief in anything beyond the sensation of the moment. An Ethic which gives a real meaning to the idea of duty must, therefore, postulate a theory of knowledge which admits of the validity of intellectual concepts or categories which are not merely sensations or derived from mere sensation. Or, if we turn from theories of knowledge to theories of Being (Ontology, or Metaphysic in the narrower sense), it is clear that some theories of the Universe necessarily involve the denial of all validity to our moral judgements when these are considered as statements of actual objective fact, and not merely of certain imaginings which actually have a kind of existence in the minds of some human beings. Materialistic Automatism, for instance, asserts that all psychical events are caused wholly and entirely by physical events—that no thought, emotion, volition of mine can ever cause another thought, emotion or

volition, still less an event in the physical world. Such a view contradicts all that is implied in asserting that it is right for us to act in a certain way. The belief in right and wrong does imply that I am the real cause of my own acts, that the acts will be good or bad according as I am good or bad, according as I do or do not determine my acts by reference to a certain ideal of Duty. According to the materialistic view just indicated, such a notion must be set down as a pure delusion. My consciousness—my consciousness say, of a duty to get up in the morning—is a mere “epiphenomenon” or by-product of a physical process which has nothing to do with the subsequent psychical event which I call a volition to get up—still less with the actual motions of my body which are commonly supposed to result from this volition. The validity of our moral notions then absolutely presupposes (1) the existence of a permanent spiritual self; (2) that human acts are really caused by such a self. In this sense Freedom is an absolutely necessary postulate of Morality.

It would lead us too far away from our main subject to discuss the further problem whether each act of the self is determined by the original character of that self (itself caused by the character of its ancestors and ultimately by the nature of the Universe) together with the influence exercised upon it by its environment from the moment of birth to the moment of the act, or whether each particular act (when and in so far as it is free) constitutes an absolutely new beginning unconnected by any causal law with anything that is already in existence. I must be content with saying that there are, to my mind, insuperable difficulties to this “indeterministic” theory of Free-will. It involves the belief that events may happen without a cause; and so far from being necessary to Morality, it destroys the whole conception of moral responsibility. If my character is

not the cause of my good and bad actions, why should I be praised or blamed for them? What is necessary to the belief in moral obligation is that my character should be regarded as the real cause of my acts. This view of the Free-will problem may be called the theory of Self-determination, and the denial of Free-will in this sense implies the denial of all validity to the fundamental conceptions of the moral consciousness. Freedom in this sense may be regarded as an absolutely necessary postulate of Morality. This, of course, does not require us to deny the obvious fact that some men who have doubted or denied this postulate may practically or even theoretically recognize and act upon the idea of duty. The capacities for inconsistency in the human mind are almost unlimited.

Certain beliefs about the nature of knowledge and of the human self are thus necessary implications of a belief in valid moral judgements, for those who think those implications out; and beliefs of this kind carry with them a good many consequences for our general theory of the Universe. A man who believes in a Universe which includes selves capable of being directed by an ideal of duty and of translating this belief into action is not, strictly speaking, a Materialist. Does the belief in Moral Obligation necessarily imply anything further about the Universe? Can a man logically believe in Moral Obligation, for instance, who thinks that the Universe, though it has somehow in the course of ages delivered itself of these spiritual autonomous selves, was originally a purely material, unconscious, mindless Universe, guided by no intelligence, directed towards no end or purpose, perhaps an Universe in which there is more evil than good? In other words, is Theism, or any other form of what is commonly called religious belief, necessary to Morality? I do not think a perfectly definite "yes" or "no" can be given to this

enquiry. On the one hand, it does not appear to me that a denial of God's existence necessarily deprives the idea of Moral Obligation of *all* meaning, as we have seen to be the case with the disbelief in the autonomous self. A man who denies or doubts the existence of God may still attach a clear and definite meaning to the idea of duty, and he is logically entitled to claim a certain objectivity for it, inasmuch as it is a part not only of *his* thinking, but of all human thinking; but I do not believe that for such a person our moral judgements can carry with them the same kind of objectivity that they do for the Theist. I do not think they can carry with them all that is implied in the objectivity which the Moral Consciousness claims for itself. Our belief in the validity of our moral ideas seems at bottom to imply that the moral law must be on a level in point of objectivity with the physical laws of nature—that they are somehow laws of the Universe, expressions of the ultimate nature of things, not merely ways of thinking which happen to have been evolved in a particular human brain, or even in the normal human brain, at a certain stage of its development. This was one of the things, no doubt, which Plato meant to assert by his "Idea of the Good"; he meant that, if moral obligation is to be treated as in the fullest sense a valid concept, the true moral ideal must be derived from the same source as all other Reality. How far could this be the case in a Universe which was essentially (so to speak) mindless, but had merely happened to deliver itself of minds in which a moral ideal was found? The physical laws of nature, on any metaphysical theory, do possess a certain objectivity; they express something which the Universe really is, or does, whether any particular individual thinks so or not. But could we, upon the view suggested, say the same of the moral law? Human ideas about Morality differ; nor can any one human mind

ever be supposed actually to contain within its thoughts the whole moral ideal in all its perfection and all its detail ; and it will be admitted that a moral ideal cannot exist out of a mind. If human (and other similarly limited) minds are the only minds there are, the moral ideal will have real existence in so far as such minds actually think it ; but no further. Our moral judgements will have no significance for the Universe. They will tell us nothing about the ultimate nature of things, beyond just the fact that certain two-legged animals in " one of the meanest of the planets " show more or less tendency to think and judge in this way. And that does not satisfactorily account for, or fully justify, the claim that the moral consciousness makes for objective validity. The Theist, on the other hand, can fully justify this claim because for him his own moral judgements, in proportion as they are true moral judgements, will represent the ideas which are eternally present to the Mind from whom all other reality is derived.<sup>1</sup> Consequently our ideal of " the good " may be taken as expressing (however inadequately) the ultimate purpose towards which the Universe is directed. Such a view of the Moral Law gives a very different meaning to " objective validity " from any which it can possess on the speculative outlook of one who (but for the admission of really acting selves) is a Materialist, a ' Naturalist ' or an Agnostic ; and it tends practically to impress this idea upon the mind in a way which is

<sup>1</sup> It would take us too far away from our subject to ask how far this objectivity can be secured by a non-theistic religion. Certainly philosophical Buddhism does make an attempt to secure it. There have been religions, or at least one religion, without a God, but never a religion without a Metaphysic, and the Metaphysic of each religion is closely connected with its Ethic. Buddhism gives an objective significance to Morality by holding that the phenomenal world is bad, and that the highest Morality represents just the way of escaping from this badness by the extinction of personal (perhaps of all) consciousness. This might be a satisfactory attempt if we were Pessimists.



but rarely found in conjunction with a non-theistic creed. The theistic explanation of the Universe does seem to be logically demanded by our consciousness of duty when the implications of that consciousness are fully thought out.

The question may be asked, "How far does the fact that our belief in the objectivity of the Moral Law demands for its own justification a theistic explanation of the Universe by itself constitute a reason for believing that explanation to be actually true?" To many minds—to Cardinal Newman, for instance—the way in which the dictates of Conscience present themselves as "commands" whose obligatoriness is quite independent of any subjective wish or inclination in the man himself, has seemed by itself a sufficient proof of the existence of a conscious Intelligence whose commands they are. When we raise the question whether this feeling can be regarded as a strict necessity of thought, we shall probably find it difficult or impossible to isolate this particular line of theistic argument from all others; for the improbability of supposing that something which we are compelled or strongly incited to think is not really in accordance with the actual nature of things depends upon the general improbability of the world being irrationally constituted. If there were good reasons for believing that the world is a mindless, purposeless, meaningless machine, I do not know that one more irrational feature in its constitution would by itself be fatal to the theory. To examine the various lines of thought which lead to the conclusion that the Universe is ultimately spiritual, and that the theistic explanation is more reasonable than any other spiritualistic theory, would involve a complete treatise on Metaphysic, or at least upon that branch of it commonly known as the Philosophy of Religion. Here it must suffice to point out: (1) that the fact that our sense of moral obligation

finds its most satisfactory and adequate justification in Theism is an additional and a very strong argument in favour of that creed ; (2) that the existence of the Moral Consciousness constitutes a necessary element in the argument for any Theism which includes the doctrine that God is good, righteous, or loving. It is because we have the concept of " good " that we are justified in supposing that it must be valid for the supreme Mind from which our minds are derived, just as we suppose that the ultimate principles of reasoning and the axioms of Mathematics are no mere human ways of thinking, but hold good for God and for all rational beings. We must therefore suppose that the course of the world is directed towards the realization of a good of which our moral ideal is a revelation—inadequate and imperfect, no doubt, but not essentially misleading. And this is the strongest, if it is not the only, ground for that faith in Immortality which constitutes so large an element in the creed of all the higher and more ethical religions.<sup>1</sup> If the amount of good realized in human life, as we know it, is inadequate to account for and to justify the world's existence and all the evil which it involves, if in particular the capacities of human nature seem too great to be intended for no more complete realization of them than our present life affords, at least for the vast majority ; if moreover the distribution of good in this life seems to be a quite inadequate satisfaction of our ideal of Justice, these are good reasons for supposing that this life is but a discipline or education for a life in which our ideals, or rather that true ideal of which our own are fragmentary revelations, will find an adequate and satisfying fulfilment. The strength of conviction which these con-

<sup>1</sup> Buddhism is the one exception, if Nirvana be supposed to imply a mere relapse into unconsciousness, but this is a state which the ordinary man can only hope to attain after many re-incarnations.

siderations will carry with them will depend upon the strength of our faith in the ultimate rationality of the Universe. We may hesitate as to whether we ought without qualification to describe the ideas of God and Immortality as "postulates of Morality," but they certainly represent the view of the Universe to which the belief in the objective validity of our moral judgements naturally leads up, and which gives the idea of objectivity a fullness of meaning which it could not otherwise claim. Without these beliefs Morality is objectively valid in the sense that it represents something which we necessarily think true; with them it is objective in the further sense that they represent a Law in accordance with which the Universe is actually governed.

When we turn from the question, "How far are any particular metaphysical or theological beliefs implied or required by a reasonable theory of Ethics" to the question, "What is in practice the moral value or influence of Religion?" we are entering upon quite another enquiry, and one for which we have little space left. Nevertheless, it may not be out of place to suggest a few of the ways in which Religion in its great historical manifestations has exercised and still exercises a moral influence which has never been exercised—and probably never will be exercised—on a large scale by any purely ethical system.

1. Although the intrinsic obligation of Morality would not altogether disappear if we adopted a purely agnostic, or a purely materialistic, theory of the Universe (so far as is consistent with the admission of a really active self), the meaning of moral obligation would, as has been contended, be profoundly modified. And even if this were not so, its practical influence would be immeasurably less. Though the belief in an objectively valid law may be speculatively possible without Religion, or at all events without theistic Religion, Theism represents the form in which that belief has exercised the strongest influence

upon great masses of men. A law which represents the law of the Universe is likely to inspire more respect than one which has no existence outside the minds of certain human beings.

2. The belief in God and Immortality supplies us with a ground for believing that the end which the moral consciousness sets before us as the end which ought to be attained, is also an end which can be and will ultimately be attained. It is possible, no doubt, to strive after the diminution of evil in a world which is essentially evil; but it is obvious that such a view of the relation between our ideals and the Universe in which they have to be realized is in the highest degree depressing to moral effort. On the other hand, the religious view of the Universe is the one which is most favourable to the awakening of such energies. It is that view of the Universe which affords the maximum encouragement to the supremacy of spiritual and universal interests over purely personal and natural ones. It would be better, doubtless, to be unselfish and spiritually-minded for a day than to be selfish and base for a millennium; but it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the degree to which the importance of the moral life is enhanced when it is thought of as the first stage in a progress towards a higher life of boundless potentialities for the individual himself and for others.<sup>1</sup>

3. It has been contended in the above pages that Morality ultimately depends upon certain self-evident truths. But self-evident truths are not truths which are evident to everyone. The higher moral ideals have in the first instance been recognized by exceptional minds, by the few rather than the many; and to the last the average man is largely dependent for the recognition of

<sup>1</sup> No doubt forms of religious belief not including belief in a personal God or Immortality *aim* at supplying the same assurance. It is questionable whether they have been or can be equally successful.

them on the superior insight of such higher minds. It has been said that the great Artist lets us see things through his eyes ; it is by a study of the works of great Masters in the past that even the Artist, still more the average man, is helped to develop such æsthetic capacities as he possesses. What is true of Art is equally or still more true of Morality—still more so because here the influence of the higher minds is commonly a condition, not merely of the awakening in the individual of the power to see what is right, but of the inclination to do it. Among these superior minds the first place is occupied by the Founders and Reformers, the Apostles and the Prophets of the higher religions. The great historical religions represent the most important means by which the higher moral ideals are communicated to the many. On the view which has been taken in this chapter as to the relation between certain theories of the Universe and certain views of the moral ideal, it is no mere accident that every one of these Religions represents both a theory of the Universe and an ethical ideal. That this has been so in the past is an undeniable historical fact : if the view be a well-founded one, it is likely that it will be so—to a considerable extent at least—in the future. It is true that in past times the belief in revelations of this kind has been associated with a belief in a supernatural communication of ethical and religious truth, as it were from the outside, to great religious personalities—a communication often thought to have been guaranteed by miraculous interferences with the course of nature. For reasons which it would be out of place to go into here, it is likely that the belief in different measures and degrees of divine self-revelation will in the future be less and less dependent upon such pre-suppositions. But the ethical influence of Religion is likely to be none the less great because the revelation will be more and more accepted on account

of its intrinsic power to satisfy the ethical and religious aspirations of the believer. If any historical religion is destined to be accepted in the modern world as the final or absolute religion, it will be because its fundamental religious and ethical ideas commend themselves to Reason and Conscience as intrinsically the highest, the most capable of being separated from the limitations and the unscientific beliefs with which they have been associated in its actual history, and of absorbing into itself the highest spiritual achievements of later ages.

4. The earlier forms of Religion were essentially national religions. It is one of the characteristics by which the higher religions are differentiated from the lower that they are universal religions. They claim the allegiance of all human beings on the ground of their intrinsic truth. And it is a further consequence of this claim that the adherents of such a religion constitute a community not identical with the nation or the state, though in point of fact such communities have often been very closely associated with the political organization. Such communities or Churches have been, to a very large extent, the means by which the higher ideals of conduct have been kept alive, propagated, and further developed in modern times. Such communities might of course conceivably be established on a purely ethical basis; but the close union which subsists between men's moral ideals and their theories about the ultimate nature of things makes it probable that the societies which exercise the most powerful influence upon the life of humanity will be in the future, as they have been in the past, societies which represent some definite view of man's relation with the Universe as well as some definite presentation of the ethical ideal.

These are a few of the reasons which lead the present writer to believe that the association between particular ethical ideals and particular ways of conceiving man's

relation to the Universe is no mere accident of history, but is likely to be a permanent feature of human thought, whatever changes may hereafter take place in the actual content either of the moral ideals accepted or of the more strictly theological or metaphysical side of the creeds with which they are connected. If this view be well founded, it is clear that it will have a most important bearing upon the much agitated question of the best way of communicating ethical instruction. From this point of view it will appear that, while purely ethical instruction is possible, and may under certain conditions have a certain value, it is *prima facie* unnatural to separate ethical teaching from instruction about the ultimate relation of man to the Universe. If the idea of an objective validity in our ethical ideals naturally leads up to the idea of God and acquires a fuller meaning from that idea, it will be unnatural and practically undesirable that the attempt should be made to teach the idea of Duty in disconnection from the idea of God. Moreover, since in point of fact the highest moral teaching of the world has been given in close association with religious ideas, the moral teacher will be at a disadvantage who is forbidden to connect his moral teaching with the current embodiments of the world's highest spiritual experiences—with the great personalities, the religious books, and the religious institutions in which they have found expression. It must not be supposed that the practical difficulties which arise from the actual divergence of religious opinion in most modern communities is absent from the attempt to give purely ethical instruction in Schools. There are nearly as many differences of opinion about Ethics as there are about Theology—in particular the vast difference which separates those moralists who do and those who do not believe in the objective validity of Duty. Many people would be more disposed to favour the project of introducing purely

ethical teaching in schools if they could be sure that the teaching would always include a recognition of this fundamental idea. Some of the model lessons which have been put forth to illustrate the possibility and value of ethical teaching are eminently calculated to awaken doubts as to whether the ethical instruction which is likely to be given under these conditions will always be based upon a belief in the categorical Imperative.

It will be desirable to conclude by summing up the view which has been taken in this chapter as to the relation between Ethics and Metaphysics (including Theology) :

1. Morality cannot be based upon or deduced from any metaphysical or theological proposition whatever. The moral judgement is ultimate and immediate. Putting this into more popular language, the immediate recognition that I ought to act in a certain way supplies a sufficient reason for so acting entirely apart from anything else that I may believe about the ultimate nature of things.

2. But the recognition of the validity of Moral Obligation in general or of any particular moral judgement logically implies the belief in a permanent spiritual self which is really the cause of its own actions. Such a belief is in the strictest sense a postulate of Morality.

3. The belief in God is not a postulate of Morality in such a sense that the rejection of it involves a denial of all meaning or validity to our moral judgements, but the acceptance or rejection of this belief does materially affect the sense which we give to the idea of obligation. The belief in the objectivity of moral judgements implies that the moral law is recognized as no merely accidental element in the construction of the human mind, but as an ultimate fact about the Universe. This rational demand cannot be met by any merely materialistic or naturalistic Metaphysic, and is best satisfied by a theory which explains the world as an expression of an intrinsically



righteous rational Will, and the moral consciousness as an imperfect revelation of the ideal towards which that Will is directed. The belief in God may be described as a postulate of Morality in a less strict or secondary sense.

4. So far from Ethics being based upon or deduced from Theology, a rational Theology is largely based upon Ethics : since the moral Consciousness supplies us with all the knowledge we possess as to the action, character, and direction of the supreme Will, and forms an important element in the argument for the existence of such a Will.

5. We must peremptorily reject the view that the obligation of Morality depends upon sanctions, *i.e.* reward and punishment, in this life or any other. But, as the belief in an objective moral law naturally leads up to and requires for its full justification the idea of God, so the idea of God involves the belief in Immortality if the present life seems an inadequate fulfilment of the moral ideal. In ways which need not be recapitulated, we have seen that it is practically a belief eminently favourable to the maximum influence of the moral ideal on life.

The whole position may perhaps be still more simply summed up. It is possible for a man to know his duty, and to achieve considerable success in doing it, without any belief in God or Immortality or any of the other beliefs commonly spoken of as religious ; but he is likely to know and do it better if he accepts a view of the Universe which includes as its most fundamental articles these two beliefs. It must not be supposed, of course, that no other beliefs taught in the historical religions are of any importance for the moral life. In particular the concrete embodiments which all the higher Religions have attempted to give to the moral ideal in the great religious personalities which they reverence, in their sacred books and religious institutions,

represent the most powerful of the spiritual influences by which the moral life of the individual soul is awakened, sustained, and developed. That this is pre-eminently true of Christianity will hardly be denied. In no other Religion does the influence of the Founder's character count for so much. It would be obviously beyond the scope of this book to examine the actual truth or the actual influence of the moral ideals embodied in any particular Religion, or of the other beliefs with which those ideals are associated. Such a task belongs to Theology, or the Philosophy of Religion; but one of the most important data upon which the Theologian has to proceed is supplied by Ethics or Moral Philosophy, or rather by the contents of that moral consciousness which it is the business of the Moral Philosopher to analyse. It will be enough to say here that it is a condition of the acceptance of any religious system as the highest and truest that the moral ideal with which it presents us is in harmony with the deliverances of the developed and enlightened moral consciousness. A reasonable defence of the claim that Christianity is the final or (as Hegel called it) "the absolute Religion" would be largely occupied with the attempt to show that it satisfies this condition in a way which no other of the historical Religions can succeed in doing.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE course of study to be recommended to the student who wishes to follow up his reading of this little book must depend a good deal upon the extent of his ambition. Ethics is a branch of Philosophy in which some knowledge of the past history of the subject is of especial importance, and yet it is one in which the newer books do not necessarily imply much acquaintance with the older. It should be recognized that a thorough insight into the subject is hardly possible without some knowledge of general philosophy, and the more metaphysical writers—especially Kant, the most famous of all ethical writers—will be found difficult, and perhaps not fully intelligible, without some such knowledge. It should be added that most of the great philosophers deal with Ethics incidentally. Spinoza's *Ethics*, though it bears that title, really contains a whole metaphysic, and the strictly ethical part can hardly be read to much advantage by itself.

ELEMENTARY TEXT-BOOKS.—Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*; d'Arcy (Bishop of Down), *A Short Study of Ethics*; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*. The first three works are more or less "Hegelian" in tendency; the last represents another type of Idealistic Philosophy. The student may begin with one of these. But there is something to be said for reading at once, as classical representatives of the two traditional ways of thinking on the subject, Butler's *Fifteen Sermons* and Mill's *Utilitarianism*, together with the first chapter of Lecky's *History of European Morals*, which contains a short sketch of the history of ethical thought, and then going on to one or more of the longer works—for instance, Sidgwick and Grote (see below). Green should certainly be included in any serious course of study, but it is well to postpone him till the student has acquired some clear knowledge of the questions at issue.

THE OLDER MORAL PHILOSOPHY.—Anyone who wishes to trace the development of Moral Philosophy should read Hobbes, *Leviathan* (early chapters); Cudworth, *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*; Clarke, Boyle Lectures on *The Being and Attributes of God* (second part); Locke, *Essay*, Bk. I. chap. iii.; Shaftesbury, *Inquiry concerning Virtue*; Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil*; Hume, *Inquiry concerning Morals*; Bishop Butler, *Fifteen Sermons*; Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*; Price, *Review*

of the *Principal Questions in Morals*. The last is one of the best of the older moralists; his thought is singularly like that of Kant at his best, without his absurdities and exaggerations.

Sidgwick's short *History of Ethics* may be strongly recommended.

MODERN WRITERS.—J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*; Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*; John Grote, *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*; Moore, *Principia Ethica*; Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*; Gizycki and Coit, *Manual of Ethical Philosophy*; Paulsen, *System of Ethics* (Eng. trans.); Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*.

MORE METAPHYSICAL WRITERS.—Kant, *Theory of Ethics* (the more important ethical writings translated by Abbott); Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*.

REPRESENTATIVES OF EVOLUTIONARY OR NATURALISTIC ETHICS.—Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*; Leslie Stephen, *Science of Ethics*; Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*; Westermarck, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas* (chiefly an anthropological enquiry into the history of morality); McDougall, *Social Psychology*. L. T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, gives a much more philosophical view of the development of Morality than Westermarck, if based on less original research: his view of Ethics can hardly be called "naturalistic." As a criticism of the more naturalistic writers, Sorley's *Ethics of Naturalism* may be mentioned. Cf. also Sidgwick, *The Ethics of T. H. Green, Herbert Spencer and Martineau*.

This list does not pretend to be more than introductory, and many writers of great importance are deliberately omitted, as a long list is apt to be confusing to the beginner. Further references to the modern literature of the subject will be found in the author's *Theory of Good and Evil*. Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, contains very full lists of modern books.



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